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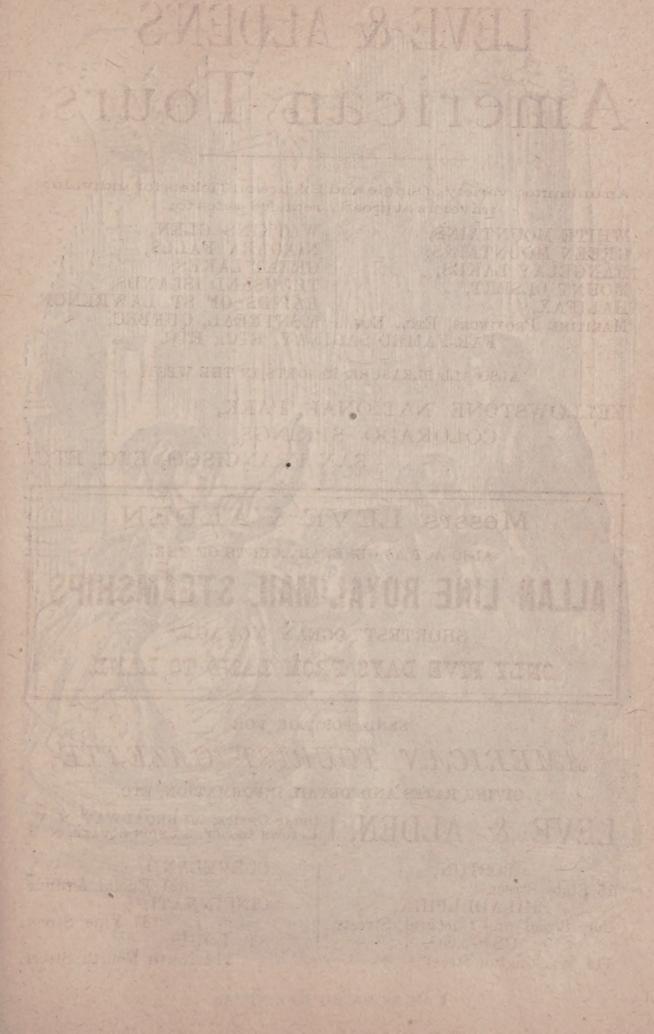
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### LOVEL THE WIDOWER.

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### LOVEL THE WIDOWER.

#### CHAPTER I.

THE BACHELOR OF BEAK STREET.

Who shall be the hero of this tale? Not I who write it. I am but the Chorus of the Play. I make remarks on the conduct of the characters: I narrate their simple story. is love and marriage in it: there is grief and disappointment: the scene is in the parlor, and the region beneath the parlor. No: it may be the parlor and kitchen, in this instance, are on the same level. There is no high life, unless, to be sure, you call a baronet's widow a lady in high life; and some ladies may be, while some certainly are not. I don't think there's a villain in the whole performance. There is an abominable selfish old woman, certainly; an old highway robber; an old sponger on other people's kindness; an old haunter of Bath and Cheltenham boarding-houses (about which how can I know anything, never having been in a boarding-house at Bath or Cheltenham in my life?); an old swindler of tradesmen, tyrant of servants, bully of the poor-who, to be sure, might do duty for a villain, but she considers herself as virtuous a woman as ever was born. The heroine is not faultless (ah! that will be a great relief to some folks, for many writers' good women are, you know, so very insipid). The principal personage you may very likely think to be no better than a muff. But is many a respectable man of our acquaintance much better? and do muffs know that they are what they are, or, knowing it, are they unhappy? Do girls decline to marry one if he is rich? Do we refuse to dine with one? I listened to one at church last

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Sunday, with all the women crying and sobbing; and, oh, dear me! how finely he preached! Don't we give him great credit for wisdom and eloquence in the House of Commons? Don't we give him important commands in the army? Can you, or can you not, point out one who has been made a peer? Doesn't your wife call one in the moment any of the children are ill? Don't we read his dear poems, or even novels? Yes; perhaps even this one is read and written by-Well? Quid rides? Do you mean that I am painting a portrait which hangs before me every morning in the looking-glass when I am shaving? Après? Do you suppose that I suppose that I have not infirmities like my neighbors? Am I weak? It is notorious to all my friends there is a certain dish I can't resist: no, not if I have already eaten twice too much at dinner. So, dear sir, or madam, have you your weakness-your irresistible dish of temptation? (for if you don't know it, your friends do). No, dear friend, the chances are that you and I are not people of the highest intellect, of the largest fortune, of the most ancient family, of the most consummate virtue, of the most faultless beauty in face and figure. We are no heroes nor angels; neither are we fiends from abodes unmentionable, black assassins, treacherous Iagos, familiar with stabbing and poison-murder or amusement, daggers or playthings, arsenic our daily bread, lies our conversation, and forgery our common handwriting. No, we are not monsters of crime, or angels walking the earth—at least I know one of us who isn't, as can be shown any day at home if the knife won't cut or the mutton comes up raw. But we are not altogether brutal and unkind, and a few folks like us. Our poetry is not as good as Alfred Tennyson's, but we can turn a couplet for Miss Fanny's album: our jokes are not always first-rate, but Mary and her mother smile very kindly when papa tells his story or makes his pun. We have many weaknesses, but we are not ruffians of crime. No more was my friend Lovel. On the contrary, he was as harmless and kindly a fellow as ever lived when I first knew him. At present, with his changed position, he is, perhaps, rather fine (and certainly I am not asked to his best dinner-parties as I used to be, where you hardly see a commoner— but stay! I am advancing matters). At the time when this story begins, I say, Lovel had his faults-which of us has not? He had buried his wife, having notoriously been henpecked by her. How many men and brethren are like him! He had a good fortune-I wish I had as much-though I dare say many people are ten times as rich. He was a good-looking fellow

enough; though that depends, ladies, upon whether you like a fair man or a dark one. He had a country house, but it was only at Putney. In fact, he was in business in the City, and being a hospitable man, and having three or four spare bedrooms, some of his friends were always welcome at Shrublands, especially after Mrs. Lovel's death, who liked me pretty well at the period of her early marriage with my friend, but got to dislike me at last and show me the cold shoulder. That is a joint I never could like (though I have known fellows who persist in dining off it year after year, who cling hold of it, and refuse to be separated from it). I say, when Lovel's wife began to show me that she was tired of my company, I made myself scarce: used to pretend to be engaged when Fred faintly asked me to Shrublands; to accept his meek apologies, proposals to dine en garçon at Greenwich, the club, and so forth; and never visit upon him my wrath at his wife's indifference-for, after all, he had been my friend at many a pinch: he never stinted at "Harts's" or "Lovegrove's," and always made a point of having the wine I liked, never mind what the price was. As for his wife, there was, assuredly, no love lost between us-I thought her a lean, scraggy, lackadaisical, egotistical, consequential, insipid creature: and as for his mother-in-law, who stayed at Fred's as long and as often as her daughter would endure her, has any one who ever knew that notorious old Lady Baker at Bath, at Cheltenham, at Brighton,—wherever trumps and frumps were found together; wherever scandal was cackled; wherever fly-blown reputations were assembled, and dowagers with damaged titles trod over each other for the pas; -who, I say, ever had a good word for that old woman? What party was not bored where she appeared? What tradesman was not done with whom she dealt? I wish with all my heart I was about to narrate a story with a good mother-in-law for a character; but then you know, my dear madam, all good women in novels are insipid. This woman certainly was not. She was not only not insipid, but exceedingly badtasted. She had a foul, loud tongue, a stupid head, a bad temper, an immense pride and arrogance, an extravagant son, and very little money. Can I say much more of a woman than this? Aha! my good Lady Baker! I was a mauvais sujet, was I? - I was leading Fred into smoking, drinking, and low bachelor habits, was I? I, his old friend, who have borrowed money from him any time these twenty years, was not fit company for you and your precious daughter? Indeed! I paid the money I borrowed from him like

a man; but did you ever pay him, I should like to know? When Mrs. Lovel was in the first column of The Times, then Fred and I used to go off to Greenwich and Blackwall, as I said; then his kind old heart was allowed to feel for his friend; then we could have the other bottle of claret without the appearance of Bedford and the coffee, which in Mrs. L.s' time used to be sent in to us before he could ring for a second bottle, although she and Lady Baker had had three glasses each out of the first. Three full glasses each, I give you my word! No, madam, it was your turn to bully me once—now it is mine and I use it. No, you old catamaran, though you pretend you never read novels, some of your confounded good-natured friends will let you know of this one. Here you are, do you hear? Here you shall be shown up. And so I intend to show up other women and other men who have offended me. Is one to be subject to slights and scorn, and not have revenge? Kindnesses are easily forgotten; but injuries !- what worthy man does not keep those in mind?

Before entering upon the present narrative, may I take leave to inform a candid public that, though it is all true, there is not a word of truth in it; that though Lovel is alive and prosperous, and you very likely have met him, yet I defy you to point him out; that his wife (for he is Lovel the Widower no more) is not the lady you imagine her to be, when you say (as you will persist in doing), "Oh, that character is intended for Mrs. Thingamy, or was notoriously drawn from Lady So-and-So." No. You are utterly mistaken. Why, even the advertizing-puffers have almost given up that stale stratagem of announcing "Revelations from High Life.—The beau monde will be startled at recognizing the portraits of some of its brilliant leaders in Miss Wiggins's forthcoming roman de société."
Or, "We suspect a certain ducal house will be puzzled to guess how the pitiless author of 'May Fair Mysteries' has become acquainted with (and exposed with a fearless hand) certain family secrets which were thought only to be known to a few of the very highest members of the aristocracy." No, I say; these silly baits to catch an unsuspecting public shall not be our arts. If you choose to occupy yourself with trying to ascertain if a certain cap fits one amongst ever so many thousand heads, you may possibly pop it on the right one: but the capmaker will perish before he tells you; unless, of course, he has some private pique to avenge, or malice to wreak, upon some individual who can't by any possibility hit again;—then, indeed, he will come boldly forward and seize upon his victim—(a bishop,

say, or a woman without coarse, quarrelsome male relatives. will be best)—and clap on him, or her, such a cap, with such ears, that all the world shall laugh at the poor wretch, shuddering, and blushing beet-root red, and whimpering deserved tears of rage and vexation, at being made the common butt of society. Besides, I dine at Lovel's still; his company and cuisine are amongst the best in London. If they suspected I was taking them off, he and his wife would leave off inviting me. Would any man of a generous disposition lose such a valued friend for a joke, or be so foolish as to show him up in a story? persons with a decent knowledge of the world will at once banish the thought, as not merely base, but absurd. I am invited to his house one day next week: vous concevez I can't mention the very day, for then he would find me out-and of course there would be no more cards for his old friend. He would not like appearing, as it must be owned he does in this memoir, as a man of not very strong mind. He believes himself to be a most determined, resolute person. He is quick in speech, wears a fierce beard, speaks with asperity to his servants (who liken him to a-to that before-named sable or ermine contrivance, in which ladies insert their hands in winter), and takes his wife to task so smartly, that I believe she believes he believes he is the master of the house. "Elizabeth, my love, he must mean A, or B, or D," I fancy I hear Lovel say; and she says, "Yes; oh! it is certainly D—his very image!" "D to a T," says Lovel (who is a neat wit). She may know that I mean to depict her husband in the above unpretending lines: but she will never let me know of her knowledge except by a little extra courtesy; except (may I make this pleasing exception?) by a few more invitations; except by a look of those unfathomable eyes (gracious goodness! to think she wore spectacles ever so long, and put a lid over them as it were!), into which, when you gaze sometimes, you may gaze so deep, and deep, and deep, that I defy you to plumb half-way down into their mystery.

When I was a young man, I had lodgings in Beak Street, Regent Street (I no more have lived in Beak Street than in Belgrave Square: but I choose to say so, and no gentleman will be so rude as to contradict another)-I had lodgings, I say in Beak Street, Regent Street. Mrs. Prior was the landlady's name. She had seen better days-landladies frequently have. Her husband—he could not be called the landlord, for Mrs. P. was manager of the place—had been in happier times, captain or lieutenant in the militia; then of Diss, in Norfolk, of no

profession; then of Norwich Castle, a prisoner for debt; then of Southampton Buildings, London, law-writer; then of the Bom-Retiro Caçadores, in the service of H. M. the Queen of Portugal, lieutenant and paymaster; then of Melina Place, St. George's Fields, &c .- I forbear to give the particulars of an existence which a legal biographer has traced step by step, and which has more than once been the subject of judicial investigation by certain commissioners in Lincoln's-Inn Fields. Well, Prior, at this time, swimming out of a hundred shipwrecks, had clambered on to a lighter, as it were, and was clerk to a coal merchant, by the river-side. "You conceive, sir," he would say, "my employment is only temporary—the fortune of war, the fortune of war!" He smattered words in not a few foreign languages. His person was profusely scented with tobacco. Bearded individuals, padding the muddy hoof in the neighboring Regent Street, would call sometimes of an evening, and ask for "the captain." He was known at many neighboring billiardtables, and I imagine, not respected. You will not see enough of Captain Prior to be very weary of him and his coarse swagger, to be disgusted by his repeated requests for small money-loans, or to deplore his loss, which you will please to suppose has happened before the curtain of our present drama draws up. I think two people in the world were sorry for him: his wife, who still loved the memory of the handsome young man who had wooed and won her; his daughter Elizabeth, whom for the last few months of his life, and up to his fatal illness, he every evening conducted to what he called her "academy." You are right. Elizabeth is the principal character in this story. When I knew her, a thin, freckled girl of fifteen, with a lean frock, and hair of a reddish hue, she used to borrow my books, and play on the First Floor's piano, when he was from home-Slumley his name was. He was editor of the Swell, a newspaper then published; author of a great number of popular songs, a friend of several music-selling houses; and it was by Mr. Slumley's interest that Elizabeth was received as a pupil at what the family called "the academy."

Captain Prior then used to conduct his girl to the Academy, but she often had to conduct him home again. Having to wait about the premises for two, or three, or five hours sometimes, whilst Elizabeth was doing her lessons, he would naturally desire to shelter himself from the cold at some neighboring house of entertainment. Every Friday, a prize of a golden medal, nay, I believe sometimes of twenty-five silver medals, was awarded to Miss Bellenden and other young ladies for

their good conduct and assiduity at this academy. Miss Bellenden gave her gold medal to her mother, only keeping five shillings for herself, with which the poor child bought gloves,

shoes, and her humble articles of millinery.

Once or twice the Captain succeeded in intercepting that piece of gold, and I dare say treated some of his whiskered friends, the clinking trampers of the Quadrant pavement. He was a free-handed fellow when he had anybody's money in his pocket. It was owing to differences regarding the settlement of accounts that he quarrelled with the coal merchant, his very last employer. Bessy, after yielding once or twice to his importunity, and trying to believe his solemn promises of repayment, had strength of mind to refuse her father the pound which he would have taken. Her five shillings—her poor little slender pocket-money, the representative of her charities and kindnesses to the little brothers and sisters, of her little toilette ornaments, nay necessities; of those well-mended gloves, of those oft-darned stockings, of those poor boots, which had to walk many a weary mile after midnight; of those little knicknacks, in the shape of brooch or bracelet, with which the poor child adorned her homely robe or sleeve-her poor five shillings, out of which Mary sometimes found a pair of shoes, or Tommy a flannel jacket, and little Bill a coach and horse—this wretched sum, this mite, which Bessy administered among so many poor — I very much fear her father sometimes confiscated. I charged the child with the fact, and she could not deny me. I vowed a tremendous vow, that if ever I heard of her giving Prior money again, I would quit the lodgings, and never give those children lollipop, nor pegtop, nor sixpence; nor the pungent marmalade, nor the biting gingerbread-nut, nor the theatrecharacters, nor the paint-box to illuminate the same; nor the discarded clothes, which became smaller clothes upon the person of little Tommy and little Bill, for whom Mrs. Prior, and Bessy, and the little maid, cut, clipped, altered, ironed, darned, mangled, with the greatest ingenuity. I say, considering what had passed between me and the Priors - considering those money transactions, and those clothes, and my kindnesses to the children, it was rather hard that my jam-pots were poached, and my brandy-bottles leaked. And then to frighten her brother with the story of the inexorable creditor-oh, Mrs. Prior !--oh, fie, Mrs. P.!

So Bessy went to her school in a shabby shawl, a faded bonnet, and a poor little lean dress flounced with the mud and dust of all weathers, whereas there were some other young ladies, fellow-pupils of her, who laid out their gold medals to much greater advantage. Miss Delamere, with her eighteen shillings a week (calling them "silver medals" was only my wit, you see), had twenty new bonnets, silk and satin dresses for all seasons, feathers in abundance, swan's-down muffs and tippets, lovely pocket-handkerchiefs and trinkets, and many and many a half-crown mould of jelly, bottle of sherry, blanket, or what not for a poor fellow-pupil in distress; and as for Miss Montanville, who had exactly the same sal-well, who had a scholarship of exactly the same value, viz. about fifty pounds yearly—she kept an elegant little cottage in the Regent's Park, a brougham with a horse all over brass harness, and a groom with a prodigious gold lace hat-band, who was treated with frightful contumely at the neighboring cabstand; an aunt or a mother, I don't know which (I hope it was only an aunt), always comfortably dressed, and who looked after Montanville: and she herself had bracelets, brooches, and velvet pelisses of the very richest description. But then Miss Montanville was a good economist. She was never known to help a poor friend in distress, or give a fainting brother and sister a crust or a glass of wine. She allowed ten shillings a week to her father, whose name was Boskinson, said to be a clerk to a chapel in Paddington; but she would never see him-no, not when he was in hospital, where he was so ill; and though she certainly lent Miss Wilder thirteen pounds, she had Wilder arrested upon her promissory note for twenty-four, and sold up every stick of Wilder's furniture, so that the whole academy cried shame! Well, an accident occurred to Miss Montanville, for which those may be sorry who choose. On the evening of the 26th of December, Eighteen hundred and something, when the conductors of the academy were giving their grand annual Christmas Pant-I should say examination of the academy pupils before their numerous friends-Montanville, who happened to be present, not in her brougham this time, but in an aërial chariot of splendor drawn by doves, fell off a rainbow, and through the roof of the Revolving Shrine of the Amaranthine Queen, thereby very nearly damaging Bellenden, who was occupying the shrine, attired in a light blue spangled dress, waving a wand, and uttering some idiotic verses composed for her by the Professor of Literature attached to the academy, As for Montanville, let her go shrieking down that trap-door, break her leg, be taken home, and never more be character of ours. She never could speak. Her voice was as hoarse as a fishwoman's. Can that immense stout old boxkeeper at the——theatre, who limps up to ladies on the first tier, and offers that horrible footstool, which everybody stumbles over, and makes a clumsy curtsey, and looks so knowing and hard, as if she recognized an acquaintance in the splendid lady who enters the box-can that old female be the once brilliant Emily Montanville? I am told there are no lady boxkeepers in the English theatres. This, I submit, is a proof of my consummate care and artifice in rescuing from a prurient curiosity the individual personages from whom the characters of the present story are taken. Montanville is not a box-opener. She may, under another name, keep a trinket-shop in the Burlington Arcade, for what you know; but this secret no torture shall induce me to divulge. Life has its rises and its downfalls, and you have had yours, you hobbling old creature. Montanville, indeed! Go thy ways! Here is a shilling for thee. (Thank you, sir.) Take away that confounded footstool, and never let us see thee more!

Now the fairy Amarantha was like a certain dear young lady of whom we have read in early youth. Up to twelve o'clock, attired in sparkling raiment, she leads the dance with the prince (Gradini, known as Grady in his days of banishment at the T. R. Dublin). At supper, she takes her place by the prince's royal father (who is alive now, and still reigns occasionally, so that we will not mention his revered name). She makes believe to drink from the gilded pasteboard, and to eat of the mighty pudding. She smiles as the good old irascible monarch knocks the prime minister and the cooks about: she blazes in splendor; she beams with a thousand jewels, in comparison with which the Koh-i-noor is a wretched lustreless little pebble: she disappears in a chariot, such as a Lord Mayor never rode in :and at midnight, who is that young woman tripping homeward through the wet streets in a battered bonnet, a cotton shawl, and a lean frock fringed with the dreary winter flounces?

Our Cinderella is up early in the morning: she does no little portion of the housework: she dresses her sisters and brothers: she prepares papa's breakfast. On days when she has not to go to morning lessons at her academy, she helps with the dinner. Heaven help us! She has often brought mine when I have dined at home, and owns to having made that famous mutton-broth when I had a cold. Foreigners come to the house—professional gentlemen—to see Slumley on the first floor; exiled captains of Spain and Portugal, companions of the warrior her father. It is surprising how she has learned their accents, and has picked up French, and Italian too. And

she played the piano in Mr. Slumley's room sometimes, as I have said; but refrained from that presently, and from visiting him altogether. I suspect he was not a man of principle. His Paper used to make direful attacks upon individual reputations; and you would find theatre and opera people most curiously praised and assaulted in the Swell. I recollect meeting him, several years after, in the lobby of the opera, in a very noisy frame of mind, when he heard a certain lady's carriage called, and cried out with exceeding strong language, which need not be accurately reported, "Look at that woman! Confound her! I made her, sir! Got her an engagement when the family was starving, sir! Did you see her, sir? She wouldn't even look at me!" Nor indeed was Mr. S. at that moment a very agreeable object to behold.

Then I remembered that there had been some quarrel with this man, when we lodged in Beak Street together. If difficulty there was, it was solved ambulando. He quitted the lodgings, leaving an excellent and costly piano as security for a heavy bill which he owed to Mrs. Prior, and the instrument was presently fetched away by the music-sellers, its owners. But regarding Mr. S——'s valuable biography, let us speak very gently. You see it is "an insult to literature" to say that there are disreputable and dishonest persons who write in news-

papers.

Nothing, dear friend, escapes your penetration: if a joke is made in your company, you are down upon it instanter, and your smile rewards the wag who amuses you: so you knew at once, whilst I was talking of Elizabeth and her academy, that a theatre was meant, where the poor child danced for a guinea or five-and-twenty shillings per week. Nay, she must have had not a little skill and merit to advance to the quarter of a hundred; for she was not pretty at this time, only a rough, tawnyhaired filly of a girl, with great eyes. Dolphin, the manager, did not think much of her, and she passed before him in his regiment of Sea-nymphs, or Bayadères, or Fairies, or Mazurka maidens (with their fluttering lances and little scarlet slyboots!) scarcely more noticed than private Jones standing under arms in his company when his Royal Highness the Field Marshal gallops by. There were no dramatic triumphs for Miss Bellenden: no bouquets were flung at her feet: no cunning Mephistopheles—the emissary of some philandering Faustus outside corrupted her duenna, or brought her caskets of diamonds. Had there been any such admirer for Bellenden, Dolphin would not only not have been shocked, but he would very likely have

raised her salary. As it was, though himself, I fear, a person of loose morals, he respected better things. "That Bellenden's a good hhonest gurl," he said to the present writer: "works hard: gives her money to her family: father a shy old cove. Very good family I hear they are!" and he passes on to some other of the innumerable subjects which engage a manager.

Now, why should a poor lodging-house keeper make such a mighty secret of having a daughter earning an honest guinea by dancing at a theatre? Why persist in calling the theatre an academy? Why did Mrs. Prior speak of it as such, to me who knew what the truth was, and to whom Elizabeth herself made

no mystery of her calling?

There are actions and events in its life over which decent Poverty often chooses to cast a veil that is not unbecoming wear. We can all, if we are minded, peer through this poor flimsy screen: often there is no shame behind it:—only empty platters, poor scraps, and other threadbare evidence of want and cold. And who is called on to show his rags to the public, and cry out his hunger in the street? At this time (her character has developed itself not so amiably since), Mrs. Prior was outwardly respectable; and yet, as I have said, my groceries were consumed with remarkable rapidity; my wine and brandy bottles were all leaky, until they were excluded from air under a patent lock; my Morel's raspberry jam, of which I was passionately fond, if exposed on the table for a few hours, was always eaten by the cat, or that wonderful little wretch of a maid-of-all-work, so active, yet so patient, so kind, so dirty, so obliging. Was it the maid who took those groceries? I have seen the "Gazza Ladra," and know that poor little maids are sometimes wrongfully accused; and besides, in my particular case, I own I don't care who the culprit was. At the year's end, a single man is not much poorer for this house-tax which he pays. One Sunday evening, being confined with a cold, and partaking of that mutton-broth which Elizabeth made so well, and which she brought me, I entreated her to bring from the cupboard, of which I gave her the key, a certain brandy-bottle. She saw my face when I looked at her: there was no mistaking its agony. There was scarce any brandy left: it had all leaked away: and it was Sunday, and no good brandy was to be bought that evening.

Elizabeth, I say, saw my grief. She put down the bottle, and she cried: she tried to prevent herself from doing so at first,

but she fairly burst into tears.

"My dear—dear child," says I, seizing her hand, "you don't suppose I fancy you——"

"No-no!" she says, drawing the large hand over her eyes. "No-no! but I saw it when you and Mr. Warrington last 'ad

some. Oh! do have a patting lock!"

"A patent lock, my dear!" I remarked. "How odd that you, who have learned to pronounce Italian and French words so well, should make such strange slips in English! Your mother speaks well enough."

"She was born a lady. She was not sent to be a milliner's girl, as I was, and then among those noisy girls at that—oh! that place!" cries Bessy, in a sort of desperation, clenching her

Here the bells of St. Beak's began to ring quite cheerily for evening service. I heard "Elizabeth!" cried out from the lower regions by Mrs. Prior's cracked voice. And the maiden went her way to church, which she and her mother never missed of a Sunday; and I dare say I slept just as well without the

brandy-and-water.

Slumley being gone, Mrs. Prior came to me rather wistfully one day, and wanted to know whether I would object to Madame Bentivoglio, the opera-singer, having the first floor? This was too much, indeed! How was my work to go on with that woman practising all day and roaring underneath me? But, after sending away so good a customer, I could not refuse to lend the Priors a little more money; and Prior insisted upon treating me to a new stamp, and making out a new and handsome bill for an amount nearly twice as great as the last: which he had no doubt under heaven, and which he pledged his honor as an officer and a gentleman, that he would meet. Let me see: That was how many years ago?—Thirteen, fourteen, twenty? Never mind. My fair Elizabeth, I think if you saw your poor old father's signature now, you would pay it. I came upon it lately in an old box I haven't opened these fifteen years, along with some letters written-never mind by whomand an old glove that I used to set an absurd value by; and that emerald-green tabinet waistcoat which kind old Mrs. Macmanus gave me, and which I wore at the L-d L-t-nt's ball, Ph-n-x Park, Dublin, once, when I danced with her there! Lord!-Lord! It would no more meet round my waist now than round . Daniel Lambert's. How we outgrow things!

But as I never presented this united bill of 43% odd (the first portion of 231., &c., was advanced by me in order to pay an execution out of the house)—as I never expected to have it paid any more than I did to be Lord Mayor of London, - I say it was a little hard that Mrs. Prior should write off to her

brother (she writes a capital letter), blessing Providence that had given him a noble income, promising him the benefit of her prayers, in order that he should long live to enjoy his large salary, and informing him that an obdurate creditor, who shall be nameless (meaning me), who had Captain Prior in his power (as if, being in possession of that dingy scrawl, I should have known what to do with it), who held Mr. Prior's acceptance for 431. 14s. 4d. due on the 3rd July (my bill), would infallibly bring their family to RUIN, unless a part of the money was paid up. When I went up to my old college, and called on Sargent, at Boniface Lodge, he treated me as civilly as if I had been an undergraduate; scarcely spoke to me in hall, where, of course, I dined at the Fellows' table; and only asked me to one of Mrs. Sargent's confounded tea-parties during the whole time of my stay. Now it was by this man's entreaty that I went to lodge at Prior's; he talked to me after dinner one day, he hummed, he ha'd, he blushed, he prated in his pompous way, about an unfortunate sister in London-fatal early marriagehusband, Captain Prior, Knight of the Swan with Two Necks of Portugal, most distinguished officer, but imprudent speculator-advantageous lodgings in the centre of London, quiet, though near the Clubs—if I was ill (I am a confirmed invalid), Mrs. Prior, his sister, would nurse me like a mother. So, in a word, I went to Prior's; I took the rooms: I was attracted by some children: Amelia Jane (that little dirty maid before mentioned) dragging a go-cart, containing a little dirty pair; another marching by them, carrying a fourth wellnigh as big as himself. These little folks, having threaded the mighty flood of Regent Street, debouched into the quiet creek of Beak Street, just as I happened to follow them. And the door at which the small caravan halted,—the very door I was in search of,—was opened by Elizabeth, then only just emerging from childhood, with tawny hair falling into her solemn eyes.

The aspect of these little people, which would have deterred many, happened to attract me. I am a lonely man. I may have been ill-treated by some one once, but that is neither here nor there. If I had had children of my own, I think I should have been good to them. I thought Prior a dreadful vulgar wretch, and his wife a scheming, greedy little woman. But the children amused me: and I took the rooms, liking to hear overhead in the morning the patter of their little feet. The person I mean has several;—husband, judge in the West Indies. Allons! now you know how I came to live at Mrs. Prior's.

Though I am now a steady, a confirmed old bachelor (I shall

call myself Mr. Batchelor, if you please, in this story; and there is some one far-far away who knows why I will NEVER take another title), I was a gay young fellow enough once. I was not above the pleasures of youth: in fact, I learned quadrilles on purpose to dance with her that long vacation when I went to read with my young friend, Lord Viscount Poldoody at Dub-psha! Be still, thou foolish heart! Perhaps I misspent my time as an undergraduate. Perhaps I read too many novels, occupied myself too much with "elegant literature" (that used to be our phrase), and spoke too often at the Union, where I had a considerable reputation. But those fine words got me no college prizes: I missed my fellowship: was rather in disgrace with my relations afterwards, but had a small independence of my own, which I eked out by taking a few pupils for little-goes and the common degree. At length, a relation dying, and leaving me a further small income, I left the uni-

versity, and came to reside in London.

Now in my third year at college, there came to St. Boniface a young gentleman, who was one of the few gentleman-pensioners of our society. His popularity speedily was great. A kindly and simple youth, he would have been liked, I dare say, even though he had been no richer than the rest of us; but this is certain, that flattery, worldliness, mammon-worship, are vices as well known to young as to old boys; and a rich lad at school or college has his followers, tuft-hunters, led-captains, little courts, just as much as any elderly millionaire of Pall Mall, who gazes round his club to see whom he shall take home to dinner, while humble trencher-men wait anxiously, thinking-Ah! will he take me this time? or will he ask that abominable sneak and toady Henchman again? Well-well! this is an old story about parasites and flatterers. My dear good sir, I am not for a moment going to say that you ever were one; and I dare say it was very base and mean of us to like a man chiefly on account of his money. "I know"-Fred Lovel used to say -"I know fellows come to my rooms because I have a large allowance, and plenty of my poor old governor's wine, and give good dinners: I am not deceived; but, at least, it is pleasanter to come and have good dinners, and good wine, than to go to Jack Highson's dreary tea and turnout; or to Ned Roper's abominable Oxbridge port." And so I admit at once that Lovel's parties were more agreeable than most men's in the college. Perhaps the goodness of the fare, by pleasing the guests, made them more pleasant. A dinner in hall, and a pewter plate is all very well, and I can say grace before it with

all my heart; but a dinner with fish from London, game, and two or three nice little *entrées*, is better—and there was no better cook in the university than ours at St. Boniface, and ah me! there were appetites then, and digestions which rendered the

good dinner doubly good.

Between me and young Lovel a friendship sprang up, which I trust, even the publication of this story will not diminish. There is a period, immediately after the taking of his bachelor's degree, when many a university-man finds himself embarrassed. The tradesmen rather rudely press for a settlement of their Those prints we ordered calidi juventa; those shirtstuds and pins which the jewellers would persist in thrusting into our artless bosoms; those fine coats we would insist on having for our books, as well as ourselves; all these have to be paid for by the graduate. And my father, who was then alive, refusing to meet these demands, under the-I own-just plea, that my allowance had been ample, and that my half-sisters ought not to be mulcted of their slender portions in consequence of my extravagance, I should have been subject to very serious inconvenience—nay, possibly, to personal incarceration—had not Lovel, at the risk of rustication, rushed up to London to his mother (who then had especial reasons for being very gracious with her son), obtained a supply of money from her, and brought it to me at Mr. Shackell's horrible hotel, where I was lodged. He had tears in his kind eyes; he grasped my hand a hundred and hundred times as he flung the notes into my lap; and the recording tutor (Sargent was only tutor then), who was going to bring him up before the master for breach of discipline, dashed away a drop from his own lid, when, with a moving eloquence, I told what had happened, and blotted out the transaction with some particular old 1811 Port, of which we freely partook in his private rooms that evening. By laborious instalments, I had the happiness to pay Lovel back. I took pupils, as I said; I engaged in literary pursuits: I became connected with a literary periodical, and, I am ashamed to say, I imposed myself upon the public as a good classical scholar. I was not thought the less learned, when, my relative dying, I found myself in possession of a small independency; and my "Translations from the Greek," my "Poems by Beta," and my articles in the paper of which I was part proprietor for several years, have had their little success in their day.

Indeed at Oxbridge, if I did not obtain university honors, at least I showed literary tastes. I got the prize essay one year at Boniface, and plead guilty to have written essays, poems,

and a tragedy. My college friends had a joke at my expense (a very small joke serves to amuse those port-wine-bibbing fogies, and keeps them laughing for ever so long a time)—they are welcome, I say, to make merry at my charges-in respect of a certain bargain which I made on coming to London, and in which, had I been Moses Primrose purchasing green spectacles I could scarcely have been more taken in. My Jenkinson was an old college acquaintance, whom I was idiot enough to imagine a respectable man: the fellow had a very smooth tongue, and sleek, sanctified exterior. He was rather a popular preacher, and used to cry a good deal in the pulpit. He, and a queer wine merchant and bill-discounter, Sherrick by name, had somehow got possession of that neat little literary paper, the Museum, which, perhaps, you remember; and this eligible literary property my friend Honeyman, with his wheedling tongue, induced me to purchase. I bear no malice: the fellow is in India now, where I trust he pays his butcher and baker. He was in dreadful straits for money when he sold me the Museum. He began crying when I told him some short time afterwards that he was a swindler, and from behind his pocket-handkerchief sobbed a prayer that I should one day think better of him; whereas my remarks to the same effect produced an exactly contrary impression upon his accomplice, Sherrick, who burst out laughing in my face, and said, "The more fool you." Mr. Sherrick was right. He was a fool, without mistake, who had any moneydealing with him; and poor Honeyman was right, too; I don't think so badly of him as I did. A fellow so hardly pinched for money could not resist the temptation of extracting it from such a greenhorn. I dare say I gave myself airs as editor of that confounded Museum, and proposed to educate the public taste, to diffuse morality and sound literature throughout the nation, and to pocket a liberal salary in return for my services. I dare say I printed my own sonnets, my own tragedy, my own verses (to a Being who shall be nameless, but whose conduct has caused a faithful heart to bleed not a little). I dare say I wrote satirical articles, in which I piqued myself upon the fineness of my wit, and criticisms, got up for the nonce out of encyclopædias and biographical dictionaries; so that I would be actually astounded at my own knowledge. I dare say I made a gaby of myself to the world: pray my good friend, hast thou never done likewise? If thou hast never been a fool, be sure thou wilt never be a wise man.

I think it was my brilliant confrère on the first floor (he had pecuniary transactions with Sherrick, and visited two or three

of her Majesty's metropolitan prisons at that gentleman's suit) who first showed me how grievously I had been cheated in the newspaper matter. Slumley wrote for a paper printed at our office. The same boy often brought proofs to both of us—a little bit of a puny bright-eyed chap, who looked scarce twelve years old, when he was sixteen; who in wit was a man, when in stature he was a child,—like many other children of the poor.

This little Dick Bedford used to sit many hours asleep on my landing-place or Slumley's, whilst we were preparing our invaluable compositions within our respective apartments. S--- was a good-natured reprobate, and gave the child of his meat and his drink. I used to like to help the little man from my breakfast, and see him enjoy the meal. As he sat, with his bag on his knees, his head sunk in sleep, his little high-lows scarce reaching the floor, Dick made a touching little picture. The whole house was fond of him. The tipsy captain nodded him a welcome as he swaggered down stairs, stock, and coat, and waistcoat in hand, to his worship's toilette in the back kitchen. The children and Dick were good friends; and Elizabeth patronized him, and talked with him now and again, in her grave way. You know Clancy the composer?-know him better, perhaps, under his name of Friederich Donner? Donner used to write music to Slumley's words, or vice versa; and would come now and again to Beak Street, where he and his poet would try their joint work at the piano. At the sound of that music, little Dick's eyes used to kindle. "Oh, it's prime!" said the young enthusiast. And I will say, that good-natured miscreant of a Slumley not only gave the child pence, but tickets for the play, concerts, and so forth. Dick had a neat little suit of clothes at home; his mother made him a very nice little waistcoat out of my undergraduate's gown, and he and she, a decent woman, when in their best raiment, looked respectable enough for any theatre-pit in England.

Amongst other places of public amusement which he attended, Mr. Dick frequented the academy where Miss Bellenden danced, and whence poor Elizabeth Prior issued forth after midnight in her shabby frock. And once, the Captain, Elizabeth's father and protector, being unable to walk very accurately, and noisy and incoherent in his speech, so that the attention of Messieurs of the police was directed towards him, Dick came up, placed Elizabeth and her father in a cab, paid the fare with his own money, and brought the whole party home in triumph, himself sitting on the box of the vehicle. I chanced to be coming home myself (from one of Mrs. Wateringham's elegant

tea soirées, in Dorset Square), and reached my door just at the arrival of Dick and his caravan. "Here, cabby!" says Dick, handing out the fare, and looking with his brightest eyes. It is pleasanter to look at that beaming little face, than at the Captain yonder, reeling into his house, supported by his daughter. Dick cried, Elizabeth told me, when, a week afterwards, she wanted to pay him back his shilling; and she said he was a

strange child, that he was.

I revert to my friend Lovel. I was coaching Lovel for his degree (which, between ourselves, I think he never would have attained), when he suddenly announced to me, from Weymouth, where he was passing the vacation, his intention to quit the university, and to travel abroad. "Events have happened, dear friend," he wrote, "which will make my mother's home miserable to me (I little knew when I went to town about your business, what caused her wonderful complaisance to me). She would have broken my heart, Charles" (my Christian name is Charles), "but its wounds have found a consoler!"

Now, in this little chapter, there are some little mysteries propounded, upon which, were I not above any such artifice, I

might easily leave the reader to ponder for a month.

1. Why did Mrs. Prior, at the lodgings, persist in calling the

theatre at which her daughter danced the academy?

2. What were the special reasons why Mrs. Lovel should be very gracious with her son, and give him 150l. as soon as he asked for the money?

3. Why was Fred Lovel's heart nearly broken? And 4.

Who was his consoler?

I answer these at once, and without the slightest attempt at delay or circumlocution. 1. Mrs. Prior, who had repeatedly received money from her brother, John Erasmus Sargent, D. D., Master of St. Boniface College, knew perfectly well that if the Master (whom she already pestered out of his life) heard that she had sent a niece of his on the stage, he would never give her another shilling.

2. The reason why Emma, widow of the late Adolphus Loeffel, of Whitechapel Road, sugar-baker, was so particularly gracious to her son, Adolphus Frederick Lovel, Esq., of St. Boniface College, Oxbridge, and principal partner in the house of Loeffel aforesaid, an infant, was that she, Emma, was about to contract a second marriage with the Rev. Samuel Bon-

nington.

3. Fred Lovel's heart was so very much broken by this intelligence, that he gave himself airs of Hamlet, dressed in black, wore his long fair hair over his eyes, and exhibited a hundred signs of grief and desperation: until—

4. Louisa (widow of the late Sir Popham Baker, of Bakerstown, co. Kilkenny, Baronet,) induced Mr. Lovel to take a trip on the Rhine with her and Cecilia, fourth and only unmarried

daughter of the aforesaid Sir Popham Baker, deceased.

My opinion of Cecilia I have candidly given in a previous page. I adhere to that opinion. I shall not repeat it. The subject is disagreeable to me, as the woman herself was in life. What Fred found in her to admire I cannot tell: lucky for us all, that tastes, men, women, vary. You will never see her alive in this history. That is her picture, painted by the late Mr. Gandish. She stands fingering that harp with which she has often driven me half mad with her "Tara's Halls" and her "Poor Marianne." She used to bully Fred so, and be so rude to his guests, that in order to pacify her, he would meanly say, "Do, my love, let us have a little music!" and thrumpty thrumpty, off would go her gloves, and "Tara's Halls" would "The harp that once," indeed! the accursed catgut scarce knew any other music, and "once" was a hundred times at least in my hearing. Then came the period when I was treated to the cold joint which I have mentioned; and, not liking it, I gave up going to Shrublands.

So, too, did my Lady Baker, but not of her own free will, mind you. She did not quit the premises because her reception was too cold, but because the house was made a great deal too hot for her. I remember Fred coming to me in high spirits, and describing to me, with no little humor, a great battle between Cecilia and Lady Baker, and her ladyship's defeat and flight. She fled, however, only as far as Putney village, where she formed again, as it were, and fortified herself in a lodging. Next day she made a desperate and feeble attack, presenting herself at Shrublands lodge gate, and threatening that she and sorrow would sit down before it; and that all the world should know how a daughter treated her mother. But the gate was locked, and Barnet, the gardener, appeared behind it, saying, "Since you are come, my lady, perhaps you will pay my missis the four-and-twenty shillings you borrowed of her." And he grinned at her through the bars, until she fled before him, cowering. Lovel paid the little forgotten account; the best four-and-twenty shillings he had ever laid out, he said.

Eight years passed away; during the last four of which I scarce saw my old friend, except at clubs and taverns, where we met privily, and renewed, not old warmth and hilarity, but

old kindness. One winter he took his family abroad; Cecilia's health was delicate, Lovel told me, and the doctor had advised that she should spend a winter in the south. He did not stay with them: he had pressing affairs at home; he had embarked in many businesses besides the paternal sugar-bakery; was concerned in companies, a director of a joint-stock bank, a man in whose fire were many irons. A faithful governess was with the children; a faithful man and maid were in attendance on the invalid; and Lovel, adoring his wife as he certainly did, yet supported her absence with great equanimity.

In the spring I was not a little scared to read amongst the deaths in the newspaper:—"At Naples, of scarlet fever, on the 25th ult., Cecilia, wife of Frederick Lovel, Esq., and daughter of the late Sir Popham Baker, Bart." I knew what my friend's grief would be. He had hurried abroad at the news of her illness; he did not reach Naples in time to receive the last words

of his poor Cecilia.

Some months after the catastrophe, I had a note from Shrublands. Lovel wrote quite in the old affectionate tone. He begged his dear old friend to go to him, and console him in his solitude. Would I come to dinner that evening?

Of course I went off to him straightway. I found him in deep sables in the drawing-room with his children, and I confess I was not astonished to see my Lady Baker once more in that

room.

"You seem surprised to see me here, Mr. Batchelor?" says her ladyship, with that grace and good-breeding which she generally exhibited; for if she accepted benefits, she took care to insult those from whom she received them.

"Indeed, no," said I, looking at Lovel, who piteously hung down his head. He had his little Cissy at his knee: he was sitting under the portrait of the defunct musician, whose harp, now muffled in leather, stood dimly in the corner of the room.

"I am here not at my own wish, but from a feeling of duty towards that—departed—angel!" says Lady Baker, pointing

to the picture.

"I am sure when mamma was here, you were always quar relling," says little Popham, with a scowl.

"This is the way those innocent children have been taught

to regard me," cries grandmamma.

"Silence, Pop," says papa, "and don't be a rude boy."

"Isn't Pop a rude boy?" echoes Cissy.

"Silence, Pop," continues papa, "or you must go up to Miss Prior."

## CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH MISS PRIOR IS KEPT AT THE DOOR.

Or course we all know who she was, the Miss Prior of Shrublands, whom papa and grandmamma called to the unruly children. Years had passed since I had shaken the Beak Street dust off my feet. The brass plate of "Prior" was removed from the once familiar door, and screwed, for what I can tell, on to the late reprobate owner's coffin. A little eruption of mushroom-formed brass knobs I saw on the door-post when I passed by it last week, and CAFÉ DES AMBASSADEURS was thereon inscribed, with three fly-blown blue teacups, a couple of coffee-pots of the well-known Britannia metal, and two freckled copies of the Indépendence Belge hanging over the window-blind. Were those their Excellencies the Ambassadors at the door, smoking cheroots? Pool and Billiards were written on their countenances, their hats, their elbows. They may have been ambassadors down on their luck, as the phrase is. They were in disgrace, no doubt, at the court of her imperial majesty Queen Fortune. Men as shabby have retrieved their disgraces ere now, washed their cloudy faces, strapped their dingy waistcoats with cordons, and stepped into fine carriages from quarters not a whit more reputable than the "Café des Ambassadeurs." If I lived in the Leicester Square neighborhood, and kept a café, I would always treat foreigners with respect. They may be billiard-markers now, or doing a little shady police business; but why should they not afterwards be generals and great officers of state? Suppose that gentleman is at present a barber, with his tongs and stick of fixature for the mustaches, how do you know he has not his epaulettes and his bâton de maréchal in the same pouch? I see engraved on the second-floor bell, on my rooms, "Plugwell." Who can Plugwell be, whose feet now warm at the fire where I sat many a long evening? And this gentleman with the fur collar, the straggling beard, the frank and engaging leer, the somewhat husky voice, who is calling out on the doorstep, "Step in, and 'ave it done. Your correct likeness, only one shilling "-is he an ambassador too? Ah, no: he is only the chargé-d'affaires of a photographer who lives up stairs: no doubt where the little ones used to be. Bless me! Photography was an infant, and in the nursery, too, when we lived in Beak Street.

Shall I own that, for old time's sake, I went up stairs, and "'ad it done"—that correct likeness, price one shilling? Would Some One (I have said, I think, that the party in question is well married in a distant island) like to have the thing, I wonder, and be reminded of a man whom she knew in life's prime, with brown curly locks, as she looked on the effigy of this elderly gentleman, with a forehead as bare as a billiard-ball?

As I went up and down that darkling stair, the ghosts of the Prior children peeped out from the banisters; the little faces smiled in the twilight: it may be wounds (of the heart) throbbed and bled again,—oh, how freshly and keenly! How infernally I have suffered behind that door in that room—I mean that one where Plugwell now lives. Confound Plugwell! I wonder what that woman thinks of me as she sees me shaking my fist at the door? Do you think me mad, madam? I don't care if you do. Do you think when I spoke anon of the ghosts of Prior's children, I mean that any of them are dead? None are, that I know of. A great hulking Bluecoat boy, with fluffy whiskers, spoke to me not long since, in an awful bass voice, and announced his name as "Gus Prior." And "How's Elizabeth?" he added, nodding his bullet head. Elizabeth, indeed, you great vulgar boy! Elizabeth,—and, by the way, how long

we have been keeping her waiting!

You see, as I beheld her, a heap of memories struck upon me, and I could not help chattering; when of course-and you are perfectly right, only you might just as well have left the observation alone: for I knew quite well what you were going to say-when I had much better have held my tongue. Elizabeth means a history to me. She came to me at a critical period of my life. Bleeding and wounded from the conduct of that other individual (by her present name of Mrs. O'D-her present O'D-ous name—I say, I will never—never call her)—desperately wounded and miserable on my return from a neighboring capital, I went back to my lodgings in Beak Street, and there there grew up a strange intimacy between me and my landlady's young daughter. I told her my story-indeed, I believe I told anybody who would listen. She seemed to compassionate me. She would come wistfully into my rooms, bringing me my gruel and things (I could scarcely bear to eat for a while after-after that affair to which I may have alluded before)—she used to come to me, and she used to pity me, and I used to tell her all, and to tell her over and over again. Days and days have I passed tearing my heart out in that second-floor room which answers to the name of Plugwell now. Afternoon after afternoon have I spent there, and poured out my story of love and wrong to Elizabeth, showed her that waistcoat I told you ofthat glove (her hand wasn't so very small either)—her letters, those two or three vacuous, meaningless letters, with "My dear sir-Mamma hopes you will come to tea;" or, "If dear Mr. Batchelor should be riding in the Phœnix Park near the Long Milestone, about 2, my sister and I will be in the car, and," &c.; or, "Oh, you kind man! the tickets" (she called it tickuts -by heaven! she did) "were too welcome, and the bouquays too lovely" (this word, I saw, had been operated on with a penknife. I found no faults, not even in her spelling—then); or-never mind what more. But more of this puling, of this humbug, of this bad spelling, of this infernal jilting, swindling, heartless hypocrisy (all her mother's doing, I own; for until he got his place, my rival was not so well received as I was)-more of this RUBBISH, I say, I showed Elizabeth, and she pitied me!

She used to come to me day after day, and I used to talk to her. She used not to say much. Perhaps she did not listen; but I did not care for that. On-and on-and on I would go with my prate about my passion, my wrongs, and despair; and untiring as my complaints were, still more constant was my little hearer's compassion. Mamma's shrill voice would come to put an end to our conversation, and she would rise up with an "Oh, bother!" and go away: but the next day the good girl was sure to come to me again, when we would have another

repetition of our tragedy.

I dare say you are beginning to suppose (what, after all, is a very common case, and certainly no conjuror is wanted to make the guess) that out of all this crying and sentimentality, which a soft-hearted old fool of a man poured out to a young girl-out of all this whimpering and pity, something which is said to be akin to pity might arise. But in this, my good madam, you are utterly wrong. Some people have the smallpox twice; I do not. In my case, if a heart is broke, it's broke: if a flower is withered, it's withered. If I choose to put my grief in a ridiculous light, why not? why do you suppose I am going to make a tragedy of such an old used-up, battered, stale, vulgar, trivial every-day subject as a jilt who plays with a man's passion, and laughs at him, and leaves him? Tragedy indeed! Oh, yes! poison-black-edged note-paper-Waterloo Bridgeone more unfortunate, and so forth! No: if she goes, let her go!-si celeres quatit pennas, I puff the what-d'ye-call-it away! But I'll have no tragedy, mind you.

Well, it must be confessed that a man desperately in love

(as I fear I must own I then was, and a good deal cut up by Glorvina's conduct) is a most selfish being: whilst women are so soft and unselfish that they can forget or disguise their own sorrows for a while, whilst they minister to a friend in affliction. I did not see, though I talked with her daily, on my return from that accursed Dublin, that my little Elizabeth was pale and distraite, and sad, and silent. She would sit quite dumb whilst I chattered, her hands between her knees, or draw one of them over her eyes. She would say, "Oh, yes! Poor fellow-poor fellow!" now and again, as giving a melancholy confirmation of my dismal stories; but mostly she remained quiet, her head drooping towards the ground, a hand to her chin, her feet to the fender.

I was one day harping on the usual string. I was telling Elizabeth how, after presents had been accepted, after letters had passed between us (if her scrawl could be called letters, if my impassioned song could be so construed), after everything but the actual word had passed our lips-I was telling Elizabeth how, on one accursed day, Glorvina's mother greeted me on my arrival in M-rr-n Square, by saying, "Dear, dear Mr. Batchelor, we look on you quite as one of the family! Congratulate me-congratulate my child! Dear Tom has got his appointment as Recorder of Tobago; and it is to be a match between him and his cousin Glory."

"His cousin What!" I shriek with a maniac laugh.

"My poor Glorvina! Sure the children have been fond of each other ever since they could speak. I knew your kind heart

would be the first to rejoice in their happiness."

And so, say I—ending the story—I, who thought myself loved, was left without a pang of pity: I, who could mention a hundred reasons why I thought Glorvina well disposed to me, was told she regarded me as an uncle! Were her letters such as nieces write? Who ever heard of an uncle walking round Merrion Square for hours of a rainy night, and looking up to a bedroom window, because his niece, forsooth, was behind it! I had set my whole heart on the cast, and this was the return I got for it. For months she cajoles me-her eyes follow me, her cursed smiles welcome and fascinate me, and at a moment, at the beck of another—she laughs at me and leaves me!

At this, my little pale Elizabeth, still hanging down, cries, "Oh, the villain! the villain!" and sobs so that you might

have thought her little heart would break.

"Nay," said I, "my dear, Mr. O'Dowd is no villain. His uncle, Sir Hector, was as gallant an old officer as any in the service. His aunt was a Molloy, of Molloystown, and they are of excellent family, though, I believe, of embarrassed circumstances; and young Tom-"

"Tom?" cries Elizabeth, with a pale, bewildered look. "His name wasn't Tom, dear Mr. Batchelor; his name was Woo-

woo-illiam!" and the tears begin again.

Ah, my child! my child! my poor young creature! and you, too, have felt the infernal stroke. You, too, have passed the tossing nights of pain-have heard the dreary hours toll-have looked at the cheerless sunrise with your blank sleepless eyes —have woke out of dreams, mayhap, in which the beloved one was smiling on you, whispering love-words-oh! how sweet and fondly remembered! What!-your heart has been robbed, too, and your treasury is rifled and empty !- poor girl! And I looked in that sad face, and saw no grief there! You could do your little sweet endeavor to soothe my wounded heart, and I never saw yours was bleeding! Did you suffer more than I did, my poor little maid? I hope not. Are you so young, and is all the flower of life blighted for you? the cup without savor, the sun blotted, or almost invisible over your head? The truth came on me all at once: I felt ashamed that my own selfish grief should have made me blind to hers.

"What!" said I, "my poor child? Was it

I pointed with my finger downwards.

She nodded her poor head.

I knew it was the lodger who had taken the first floor shortly after Slumley's departure. He was an officer in the Bombay Army. He had had the lodgings for three months. He had sailed for India shortly before I returned home from Dublin.

Elizabeth is waiting all this time—shall she come in?

not yet. I have still a little more to say about the Priors.

You understand that she was no longer Miss Prior of Beak Street, and that mansion, even at the time of which I write, had been long handed over to other tenants. The Captain dead, his widow with many tears pressed me to remain with her, and I did, never having been able to resist that kind of appeal. Her statements regarding her affairs were not strictly correct. -Are not women sometimes incorrect about money matters?-A landlord (not unjustly indignant) quickly handed over the mansion in Beak Street to other tenants. The Queen's taxes swooped down on poor Mrs. Prior's scanty furniture—on hers? -on mine likewise: on my neatly bound college books, emblazoned with the effigy of Bonifacius, our patron, and of Bishop

Budgeon, our founder; on my elegant Raphael Morghen prints, purchased in undergraduate days (ye powers! what did make us boys go tick for fifteen-guinea proofs of Raphael, Dying Stags, Duke of Wellington Banquets, and the like?); my harmonium, at which some one has warbled songs of my composition (I mean the words, artfully describing my passion, my hopes, or my despair); on my rich set of Bohemian glass, bought on the Ziel, Frankfort O. M.; on my picture of my father, the late Captain Batchelor (Hoppner), R. N., in white ducks, and a telescope, pointing, of course, to a tempest, in the midst of which was a naval engagement; on my poor mother's miniature, by old Adam Buck, in pencil and pink, with no waist to speak of at all; my tea and cream pots (bullion), with a hundred such fond knick-nacks as decorate the chamber of a lonely man. I found all these household treasures in possession of the myrmidons of the law, and had to pay the Priors' taxes with this hand, before I could be redintegrated in my own property. Mrs. Prior could only pay me back with a widow's tears and blessings (Prior having quitted a world where he had long ceased to be of use or ornament). The tears and blessings, I say, she offered me freely, and they were all very well. But why go on tampering with the tea-box, madam? Why put your fingeryour finger?-your whole paw-in the jam-pot? And it is a horrible fact that the wine and spirit bottles were just as leaky after Prior's decease as they had been during his disreputable lifetime. One afternoon, having a sudden occasion to return to my lodgings, I found my wretched landlady in the very act of marauding sherry. She gave an hysterical laugh, and then burst into tears. She declared that since her poor Prior's death she hardly knew what she said or did. She may have been incoherent; she was; but she certainly spoke truth on this occasion.

I am speaking lightly—flippantly, if you please—about this old Mrs. Prior, with her hard, eager smile, her wizened face, her frowning look, her cruel voice; and yet, goodness knows, I could, if I liked, be serious as a sermonizer. Why, this woman had once red cheeks, and was well-looking enough, and told few lies, and stole no sherry, and felt the tender passions of the heart, and I dare say kissed the weak old beneficed clergyman her father very fondly and remorsefully that night when she took leave of him to skip round to the back garden-gate and run away with Mr. Prior. Maternal instinct she had, for she nursed her young as best she could from her lean breast, and went about hungrily, robbing and pilfering for them.

On Sundays she furbished up that threadbare black silk gown and bonnet, ironed the collar, and clung desperately to church. She had a feeble pencil-drawing of the vicarage in Dorsetshire, and silhouettes of her father and mother, which were hung up in the lodgings wherever she went. She migrated much: wherever she went she fastened on the gown of the clergyman of the parish; spoke of her dear father the vicar, of her wealthy and gifted brother the Master of Boniface, with a reticence which implied that Dr. Sargent might do more for his poor sister and her family, if he would. She plumed herself (oh! those poor moulting old plumes!) upon belonging to the clergy; had read a good deal of good sound old-fashioned theology in early life, and wrote a noble hand, in which she had been used to copy her father's sermons. She used to put cases of conscience, to present her humble duty to the Rev. Mr. Green, and ask explanation of such and such a passage of his admirable sermon, and bring the subject round so as to be reminded of certain quotations of Hooker, Beveridge, Jeremy Taylor. I think she had an old commonplace book with a score of these extracts, and she worked them in very amusingly and dexterously into her conversation. Green would be interested: perhaps pretty young Mrs. Green would call, secretly rather shocked at the coldness of old Dr. Brown, the rector, about Mrs. Prior. Green and Mrs. Prior money transactions would ensue: Mrs. Green's visits would cease: Mrs. Prior was an expensive woman to know. I remember Pye of Maudlin, just before he "went over," was perpetually in Mrs. Prior's back parlor with little books, pictures, medals, &c., &c.—you know. They called poor Jack a Jesuit at Oxbridge; but one year at Rome I met him (with a half-crown shaved out of his head, and a hat as big as Don Basilio's); and he said, "My dear Batchelor, do you know that person at your lodgings? I think she was an artful creature! She borrowed fourteen pounds of me, and I forget how much of - seven, I think - of Barfoot, of Corpus, just - just before we were received. And I believe she absolutely got another loan from Pummel, to be able to get out of the hands of us Jesuits. Are you going to hear the Cardinal? Do-do go and hear him-everybody does: it's the most fashionable thing in Rome." And from this I opine that there are slyboots in other communions besides that of Rome.

Now Mamma Prior had not been unaware of the love-passages between her daughter and the fugitive Bombay captain. Like Elizabeth, she called Captain Walkingham "villain" readily enough; but, if I know woman's nature in the least

(and I don't), the old schemer had thrown her daughter only too frequently in the officer's way, had done no small portion of the flirting herself, had allowed poor Bessy to receive presents from Captain Walkingham, and had been the manager and directress of much of the mischief which ensued. You see, in this humble class of life, unprincipled mothers will coax and wheedle and cajole gentlemen whom they suppose to be eligible, in order to procure an establishment for their darling children! What the Prioress did was done from the best motives of course. "Never—never did the monster see Bessy without me, or one or two of her brothers and sisters, and Jack and dear Ellen are as sharp children as any in England!" protested the indignant Mrs. Prior to me; "and if one of my boys had been grown up, Walkingham never would have dared to act as he did-the unprincipled wretch! My poor husband would have punished the villain as he deserved: but what could he do in his shattered state of health? Oh! you men,you men, Mr. Batchelor! how unprincipled you are!"
"Why, my good Mrs. Prior," said I, "you let Elizabeth

come to my room often enough."

"To have the conversation of her uncle's friend, of an educated man, of a man so much older than herself! Of course, dear sir! Would not a mother wish every advantage for her child? and whom could I trust, if not you, who have ever been such a friend to me and mine?" asks Mrs. Prior, wiping her dry eyes with the corner of her handkerchief, as she stands by my fire, my monthly bills in hand,—written in her neat old-fashioned writing, and calculated with that prodigal liberality which she always exercised in compiling the little accounts between us. "Why, bless me!" says my cousin, little Mrs. Skinner, coming to see me once when I was unwell, and examining one of the just-mentioned documents,-" bless me! Charles, you consume more tea than all my family, though we are seven in the parlor, and as much sugar and butter, -well, it's no wonder you are bilious!"

"But then, my dear, I like my tea so very strong," said I; "and you take yours uncommonly mild. I have remarked it at

your parties."

"It's a shame that a man should be robbed so," cried Mrs. S.

"How kind it is of you to cry thieves, Flora!" I reply.

"It's my duty, Charles!" exclaims my cousin. "And I should like to know who that great, tall, gawky, red-haired girl in the passage is!"

Ah me! the name of the only woman who ever had possession of this heart was not Elizabeth; though I own I did think at one time that my little schemer of a landlady would not have objected if I had proposed to make Miss Prior Mrs. Batchelor. And it is not only the poor and needy who have this mania, but the rich, too. In the very highest circles, as I am informed by the best authorities, this match-making goes on. Ah woman-woman !--ah wedded wife !--ah fond mother of fair daughters! how strange thy passion is to add to thy titles that of mother-in-law! I am told, when you have got the title, it is often but a bitterness and a disappointment. Very likely the son-in-law is rude to you, the coarse, ungrateful brute! and very possibly the daughter rebels, the thankless serpent! And yet you will go on scheming: and having met only with disappointment from Louisa and her husband, you will try and get one for Jemima, and Maria, and down even to little Toddles coming out of the nursery in her red shoes! When you see her with little Tommy, your neighbor's child, fighting over the same Noah's ark, or clambering on the same rocking-horse, I make no doubt, in your fond silly head, you are thinking, "Will those little people meet some twenty years hence?" And you give Tommy a very large piece of cake, and have a fine present for him on the Christmas tree-you know you do, though he is but a rude, noisy child, and has already beaten Toddles, and taken her doll away from her, and made her cry. I remember, when I myself was suffering from the conduct of a young woman in-in a capital which is distinguished by a viceregal court—and from her heartlessness, as well as that of her relative, who I once thought would be my mother-in-lawshrieking out to a friend who happened to be spouting some lines from Tennyson's "Ulysses:" - " By George! Warrington, I have no doubt that when the young sirens set their green caps at the old Greek captain and his crew, waving and beckoning him with their white arms and glancing smiles, and wheedling him with their sweetest pipes-I make no doubt, sir, that the mother sirens were behind the rocks (with their dyed fronts and cheeks painted, so as to resist water), and calling out - 'Now, Halcyone, my child, that air from the Pirata! Now, Glaukopis, dear, look well at that old gentleman at the helm! Bathykolpos, love, there's a young sailor on the maintop, who will tumble right down into your lap if you beckon him!' And so on—and so on." And I laughed a wild shriek of despair. For I, too, have been on the dangerous island, and come away thence, mad, furious, wanting a strait-waistcoat.

And so, when a white-armed siren, named Glorvina, was bedevilling me with her all too tempting ogling and singing, I did not see at the time, but now I know, that her artful mother

was egging that artful child on.

How, when the Captain died, bailiffs and executions took possession of his premises, I have told in a previous page, nor do I care to enlarge much upon the odious theme. I think the bailiffs were on the premises before Prior's exit: but he did not know of their presence. If I had to buy them out, 'twas no great matter: only I say it was hard of Mrs. Prior to represent me in the character of Shylock to the Master of Boniface. Well-well! I suppose there are other gentlemen besides Mr. Charles Batchelor who have been misrepresented in this life. Sargent and I made up matters afterwards, and Miss Bessy was the cause of our coming together again. "Upon my word, my dear Batchelor," says he one Christmas, when I went up to the old college, "I did not know how much my-ahem!-my family was obliged to you! My-ahem!-niece, Miss Prior, has informed me of various acts of-ahem !- generosity which you showed to my poor sister, and her still more wretched husband. You got my second—ahem !-nephew-pardon me if I forget his Christian name-into the what-d'you-call'em-Bluecoat School; you have been, on various occasions, of considerable pecuniary service to my sister's family. A man need not take high university honors to have a good-ahem!-heart; and, upon my word, Batchelor, I and my-ahem !-wife are sincerely obliged to you!"

"I tell you what, Master," said I, "there is a point upon which you ought really to be obliged to me, and in which I have been the means of putting money into your pocket too."

"I confess I fail to comprehend you," says the Master, with

his grandest air.

"I have got you and Mrs. Sargent a very good governess for your children, at the very smallest remuneration," say I.

"Do you know the charges that unhappy sister of mine and her family have put me to already?" says the Master, turning as red as his hood.

"They have formed the frequent subject of your conversation," I replied. "You have had Bessy as a governess \* \* \*"

"A nursery governess-she has learned Latin, and a great deal more, since she has been in my house!" cries the Master.

"A nursery governess at the wages of a housemaid," I continued, as bold as Corinthian brass.

"Does my niece, does my—ahem!—children's governess, complain of my treatment in my college?" cries the Master.

"My dear Master," I asked, "you don't suppose I would have listened to her complaints, or, at any rate, have repeated

them, until now?"

"And why now, Batchelor, I should like to know?" says the Master, pacing up and down his study in a fume, under the portraits of Holy Bonifacius, Bishop Budgeon, and all the defunct bigwigs of the college. "And why now, Batchelor, I should like to know?" says he.

"Because—though after staying with you for three years, and having improved herself greatly, as every woman must in your society, my dear Master, Miss Prior is worth at least fifty guineas a year more than you give her—I would not have had

her speak until she had found a better place."

"You mean to say she proposes to go away?"

"A wealthy friend of mine, who was a member of our college by the way, wants a nursery governess, and I have recommended Miss Prior to him, at seventy guineas a year."

"And pray who's the member of my college who will give

my niece seventy guineas?" asks the Master, fiercely.

"You remember Lovel, the gentleman-pensioner?"

"The sugar-baking man—the man who took you out of ja \* \*?"

"One good turn deserves another," says I, hastily. "I

have done as much for some of your family, Sargent!"

The red Master, who had been rustling up and down his study in his gown and bands, stopped in his walk as if I had struck him. He looked at me. He turned redder than ever. He drew his hand over his eyes. "Batchelor," says he, "I ask your pardon. It was I who forgot myself-may heaven forgive me!—forgot how good you have been to my family, to my-ahem !-humble family, and-and how devoutly thankful I ought to be for the protection which they have found in you." His voice quite fell as he spoke; and of course any little wrath which I might have felt was disarmed before his contrition. We parted the best friends. He not only shook hands with me at the study door, but he actually followed me to the halldoor, and shook hands at his lodge porch, sub Fove, in the quadrangle. Huckles, the tutor (Highlow Huckles we used to call him in our time), and Botts (Trumperian professor), who happened to be passing through the court at the time, stood aghast as they witnessed the phenomenon.

"I say, Batchelor," asks Huckles, "have you been made a-

marquis by any chance?"

"Why a marquis, Huckles?" I ask.

"Sargent never comes to his lodge door with any man

under a marquis," says Huckles, in a low whisper.

"Or a pretty woman," says that Botts (he will have his joke.) "Batchelor, my elderly Tiresias, are you turned into a lovely young lady par hasard?"

"Get along, you absurd Trumperian professor!" say I. But the circumstance was the talk not only in Compotation Room that evening over our wine, but of the whole college. And further, events happened which made each man look at his neighbor with wonder. For that whole term Sargent did not ask our nobleman Lord Sackville (Lord Wigmore's son) to the lodge. (Lord W.'s father, you know, Duff, was baker to the college.) For that whole term he was rude but twice to Perks, the junior tutor, and then only in a very mild way: and what is more, he gave his niece a present of a gown, of his blessing, of a kiss, and a high character, when she went away; -and promised to put one of her young brothers to schoolwhich promise, I need not say, he faithfully kept: for he has good principles, Sargent has. He is rude: he is ill-bred: he is bumptious beyond almost any man I ever knew: he is spoiled not a little by prosperity;—but he is magnanimous: he can own that he has been in the wrong; and oh me! what a

quantity of Greek he knows!

Although my late friend the Captain never seemed to do aught but spend the family money, his disreputable presence somehow acted for good in the household. "My dear husband kept our family together," Mrs. Prior said, shaking her lean head under her meagre widow's cap. "Heaven knows how I shall provide for these lambs now he is gone." Indeed, it was not until after the death of that tipsy shepherd that the wolves of the law came down upon the lambs-myself included, who have passed the age of lambhood and mint sauce a long time. They came down upon our fold in Beak Street, I say, and ravaged it. What was I to do? Could I leave that widow and children in their distress? I was not ignorant of misfortune, and knew how to succor the miserable. Nay, I think, the little excitement attendant upon the seizure of my goods, &c., the insolvent vulgarity of the low persons in possession-with one of whom I was very near coming to a personal encounter -and other incidents which occurred in the bereft household. served to rouse me, and dissipate some of the languor and misery under which I was suffering in consequence of Miss Mulligan's conduct to me. I know I took the late Captain to

his final abode. My good friends the printers of the Museum took one of his boys into their counting-house. A blue coat and a pair of yellow stockings were procured for Augustus; and seeing the Master's children walking about in Boniface gardens with a glum-looking old wretch of a nurse, I bethought me of proposing to him to take his niece Miss Prior-and, heaven be good to me! never said one word to her uncle about Miss Bellenden and the Academy. I dare say I drew a number of long bows about her. I managed about the bad grammar pretty well, by lamenting that Elizabeth's poor mother had been forced to allow the girl to keep company with ill-educated people: and added, that she could not fail to mend her English in the house of one of the most distinguished scholars in Europe, and one of the best-bred women. I did say so, upon my word, looking that half-bred, stuck-up Mrs. Sargent gravely in the face; and I humbly trust, if that bouncer has been registered against me, the Recording Angel will be pleased to consider that the motive was good, though the statement was unjustifiable. But I don't think it was the compliment: I think it was the temptation of getting a governess for next to nothing that operated upon Madam Sargent. And so Bessy went to her aunt, partook of the bread of dependence, and drank of the cup of humiliation, and ate the pie of humility, and brought up her odious little cousins to the best of her small power, and bowed the head of hypocrisy before the don her uncle, and the pompous little upstart her aunt. She the bestbred woman in England, indeed! She, the little vain skinflint!

Bessy's mother was not a little loth to part with the fifty pounds a year which the child brought home from the Academy; but her departure thence was inevitable. Some quarrel had taken place there, about which the girl did not care to talk. Some rudeness had been offered to Miss Bellenden, to which Miss Prior was determined not to submit: or was it that she wanted to go away from the scenes of her own misery, and to try and forget that Indian Captain? Come, fellow-sufferer! Come, child of misfortune, come hither! Here is an old bachelor who will weep with thee tear for tear!

I protest here is Miss Prior coming into the room at last. pale face, a tawny head of hair combed back, under a black cap: a pair of blue spectacles, as I live! a tight mourning dress, buttoned up to her white throat; a head hung meekly down: such is Miss Prior. She takes my hand when I offer it. She drops me a demure little curtsey, and answers my many

questions with humble monosyllabic replies. She appeals constantly to Lady Baker for instruction, or for confirmation of her statements. What! have six years of slavery so changed the frank darling young girl whom I remember in Beak Street? She is taller and stouter than she was. She is awkward and high-shouldered, but surely she has a very fine figure.

"Will Miss Cissy and Master Popham have their teas here or in the school-room?" asks Bedford, the butler, of his master.

Miss Prior looks appealingly to Lady Baker.

"In the sch-" Lady Baker is beginning.

"Here—here!" bawl out the children. "Much better fun down here: and you'll send us some fruit and things from dinner, papa!" cries Cissy.

"It's time to dress for dinner," says her ladyship.

"Has the first bell rung?" asks Lovel.

"Yes, the first bell has rung, and grandmamma must go, for it always takes her a precious long time to dress for dinner!" cries Pop. And, indeed, on looking at Lady Baker, the connoisseur might perceive that her ladyship was a highly composite person, whose charms required very much care and arrangement. There are some cracked old houses where the painters and plumbers and puttyers are always at work.

"Have the goodness to ring the bell!" she says, in a majestic manner, to Miss Prior, though I think Lady Baker herself

was nearest.

I sprang towards the bell myself, and my hand meets Elizabeth's there, who was obeying her ladyship's summons, and who retreats, making me the demurest curtsey. At the summons, enter Bedford the butler (he was an old friend of mine too) and young Buttons, the page under that butler.

Lady Baker points to a heap of articles on a table, and says to Bedford: "If you please, Bedford, tell my man to give those

things to Pincott, my maid, to be taken to my room."

"Shall not I take them up, dear Lady Baker?" says Miss Prior.

But Bedford, looking at his subordinate, says: "Thomas! tell Bulkeley, her ladyship's man, to take her ladyship's things and give them to her ladyship's maid." There was a tone of sarcasm, even of parody, in Monsieur Bedford's voice; but his manner was profoundly grave and respectful. Drawing up her person, and making a motion, I don't know whether of politeness or defiance, exit Lady Baker, followed by page, bearing bandboxes, shawls, paper parcels, parasols—I know not what. Dear Popham stands on his head as grandmamma leaves the

room. "Don't be vulgar!" cries little Cissy (the dear child is always acting as a little Mentor to her brother). "I shall, if I like," says Pop; and he makes faces at her.

"You know your room, Batch?" asks the master of the

house.

"Mr. Batchelor's old room-always has the blue room," says Bedford, looking very kindly at me.

"Give us," cries Lovel, "a bottle of that Sau-"

"---terne Mr. Batchelor used to like. Château Yquem. All right!" says Mr. Bedford. "How will you have the turbot done you brought down?—Dutch sauce?—Make lobster into salad? Mr. Bonnington likes lobster-salad," says Bedford. Pop is winding up the butler's back at this time. It is evident Mr. Bedford is a privileged person in the family. As he had entered it on my nomination several years ago, and had been ever since the faithful valet, butler, and major-domo of Lovel, Bedford and I were always good friends when we met.

"By the way, Bedford, why wasn't the barouche sent for me to the bridge?" cries Lovel. "I had to walk all the way home, with a batt and stumps for Pop, with the basket of fish,

and that bandbox with my lady's-

"He-he!" grins Bedford.

"'He—he!' Confound you, why do you stand grinning there? Why didn't I have the carriage, I say?" bawls the master of the house.

"You know, sir," says Bedford. "She had the carriage." And he indicated the door through which Lady Baker had just

retreated.

"Then why didn't I have the phaeton?" asks Bedford's master.

"Your Ma and Mr. Bonnington had the phaeton."

"And why shouldn't they, pray? Mr. Bonnington is lame: I'm at my business all day. I should like to know why they shouldn't have the phaeton?" says Lovel, appealing to me. As we had been sitting talking together previous to Miss Prior's appearance, Lady Baker had said to Lovel, "Your mother and Mr. Bonnington are coming to dinner of course, Frederick?" and Lovel had said, "Of course they are," with a peevish bluster, whereof I now began to understand the meaning. The fact was, these two women were fighting for the possession of this child; but who was the Solomon to say which should have him? Not I. Nenni. I put my oar in no man's boat. Give me an easy life, my dear friends, and row me gently over.

"You had better go and dress," says Bedford sternly, look-

ing at his master; "the first bell has rung this quarter of an

hour. Will you have some '34?"

Lovel started up; he looked at the clock. "You are all ready, Batch, I see. I hope you are going to stay some time, ain't you?" And he disappeared to array himself in his sables and starch. I was thus alone with Miss Prior and her young charges, who resumed straightway their infantine gambols and quarrels.

"My dear Bessy!" I cry, holding out both hands, "I am

heartily glad to-"

"Ne m'appelez que de mon nom paternel devant tout ce monde s'il vous plait, mon cher ami, mon bon protecteur!" she says, hastily, in very good French, folding her hands and mak-

ing a curtsey.

"Oui, oui, oui! Parlez-vous Français? J'aime, tu aimes, il aime!" cries out dear Master Popham. "What are you talking about? Here's the phaeton!" and the young innocent dashes through the open window on to the lawn, whither he is followed by his sister, and where we see the carriage containing Mr. and Mrs. Bonnington rolling over the smooth walk.

Bessy advances towards me, and gives me readily enough

now the hand she had refused anon.

"I never thought you would have refused it, Bessy," said I.

"Refuse it to the best friend I ever had!" she says, pressing my hand. "Ah, dear Mr. Batchelor, what an ungrateful

wretch I should be, if I did!"

"Let me see your eyes. Why do you wear spectacles? You never wore them in Beak Street," I say. You see I was very fond of the child. She had wound herself around me in a thousand fond ways. Owing to a certain Person's conduct my heart may be a ruin—a Persepolis, sir—a perfect Tadmor. But what then? May not a traveller rest under its shattered columns? May not an Arab maid repose there till the morning dawns and the caravan passes on? Yes, my heart is a Palmyra, and once a Queen inhabited me (O Zenobia! Zenobia! to think thou should'st have been led away captive by an O'D—!) Now, I am alone, alone in the solitary wilderness. Nevertheless, if a stranger comes to me I have a spring for his weary feet, I will give him the shelter of my shade. Rest thy cheek awhile, young maiden, on my marble—then go thy ways and leave me.

This I thought, or something to this effect, as in reply to my remark, "Let me see your eyes," Bessy took off her spectacles, and I took them up and looked at her. Why didn't I



BESSY'S SPECTACLES.

at to be. We dear there. Theabeth as I loss in your need are indicting. Your cres are indicturably sad, the who are indicting. Your members of our Communeur of Servent. We have been been procked in different ships, and been cast on this say a somewhere together? It say think is somewhere together? It say think is somewhere together? It say think is not she would have been semi-alastined as it were. We would have and said nothing about it, and pulled nown the partywall and the relem our mild tea in the extract. I live in Printy County on the would have been been been that this direy lonemness and a reshaps been in the belies me that for beasy a Well-well their one specially a troop of the remember these themselves me that of beasy a Well-well their one specially a remember these themselves me that he worldings noot the remember the sound of the name of obtain things noot are remember the sound of the name of obtain the distribution of the remember the sound of the name of obtain the distribution of the remember them of a little and infinite or eached years in the grant of the name of the name of the sound of the name of the worldings and the grant of the name of the name

Seed-ooks-up at me from mater an old become:
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"And Uni come to tea with Flizabeth and the deat children
and wolfe, you see at diener, dear hir Berchelor thanking.

straight for all meroles Land, dear met lieuers Miraillen director, Land declare Local adams Mr. Bog americal for 195. of 196 went of colors And does Mr. Bog americal 195. of 196 met let me. I want press tout hand. What a section of the

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say to her, "My dear brave Elizabeth! as I look in your face, I see you have had an awful deal of suffering. Your eyes are inscrutably sad. We who are initiated, know the members of our Community of Sorrow. We have both been wrecked in different ships, and been cast on this shore. Let us go hand-in-hand, and find a cave and a shelter somewhere together?" I say, why didn't I say this to her? She would have come, I feel sure she would. We would have been semi-attached as it were. We would have locked up that room in either heart where the skeleton was, and said nothing about it, and pulled down the party-wall and taken our mild tea in the garden. I live in Pump Court now. It would have been better than this dingy loneliness and a snuffy laundress who bullies me. But for Bessy? Well—well, perhaps better for her too.

I remember these thoughts rushing through my mind whilst I held the spectacles. What a number of other things too? I remember two canaries making a tremendous concert in their cage. I remember the voices of the two children quarrelling on the lawn, the sound of the carriage wheels grinding over the gravel; and then of a little old familiar cracked voice in my ear, with a "La, Mr. Batchelor! are you here?" And a sly

face looks up at me from under an old bonnet.

"It is mamma," says Bessy.

"And I'm come to tea with Elizabeth and the dear children; and while you are at dinner, dear Mr. Batchelor, thankful—thankful for all mercies! And, dear me! here is Mrs. Bonnington, I do declare! Dear madam, how well you look—not twenty, I declare! And dear Mr. Bonnington! Oh, sir! let me—let me, I must press your hand. What a sermon last

Sunday! All Putney was in tears!"

And the little woman, flinging out her lean arms, seizes portly Mr. Bonnington's fat hand: as he and kind Mrs. Bonnington enter at the open casement. The little woman seems inclined to do the honors of the house. "And won't you go up stairs, and put on your cap? Dear me, what a lovely ribbon! How blue does become Mrs. Bonnington! I always say so to Elizabeth," she cries, peeping into a little packet which Mrs. Bonnington bears in her hand. After exchanging friendly words and greetings with me, that lady retires to put the lovely cap on, followed by her little jackall of an aide-de-camp. The portly clergyman surveys his pleased person in the spacious mirror. "Your things are in your old room—like to go in, and brush up a bit?" whispers Bedford to me. I am obliged to go,

you see, though, for my part, I had thought, until Bedford spoke, that the ride on the top of the Putney omnibus had left me without any need of brushing; having aired my clothes, and given my young cheek a fresh and agreeable bloom.

My old room, as Bedford calls it, was that snug apartment communicating by double doors with the drawing-room, and

whence you can walk on to the lawn out of the windows.

"Here's your books, here's your writing-paper," says Bedford, leading the way into the chamber. "Does sore eyes good to see you down here again, sir. You may smoke now. Clarence Baker smokes when he comes. Go and get some of that wine you like for dinner." And the good fellow's eyes beam kindness upon me as he nods his head, and departs to superintend the duties of his table. Of course you understand that this Bedford was my young printer's boy of former days. What a queer fellow! I had not only been kind to him, but he was grateful.

## CHAPTER III.

## IN WHICH I PLAY THE SPY.

THE room to which Bedford conducted me I hold to be the very pleasantest chamber in all the mansion of Shrublands. To lie on that comfortable cool bachelor's bed there, and see the birds hopping about on the lawn; to peep out of the French window at early morning, inhale the sweet air, mark the dewy bloom on the grass, listen to the little warblers performing their chorus, step forth in your dressing-gown and slippers, pick a strawberry from the bed, or an apricot in its season; blow one, two, three, just half a dozen puffs of a cigarette; hear the venerable towers of Putney toll the hour of six (three hours from breakfast, by consequence), and pop back into bed again with a favorite novel, or review, to set you off (you see I am not malicious, or I could easily insert here the name of some twaddler against whom I have a grudgekin): to pop back into bed again, I say, with a book which sets you off into that dear, invaluable second sleep, by which health, spirits, appetite are so prodigiously improved :- all these I hold to be most cheerful and harmless pleasures, and have partaken of them often

at Shrublands with a grateful heart. That heart may have had its griefs, but is yet susceptible of enjoyment and consolation. That bosom may have been lacerated, but is not therefore and henceforward a stranger to comfort. After a certain affair in Dublin-nay, very soon after, three months after-I recollect remarking to myself: "Well, thank my stars, I still have a relish for '34 claret." Once at Shrublands I heard steps pacing overhead at night, and the feeble but continued wail of an infant. I wakened from my sleep, was sulky, but turned and slept again. Biddlecombe the barrister I knew was the occupant of the upper chamber. He came down the next morning looking wretchedly yellow about the cheeks, and livid round the eyes. His teething infant had kept him on the march all night, and Mrs. Biddlecombe, I am told, scolds him frightfully besides. He munched a shred of toast, and was off by the omnibus to chambers. I chipped a second egg; I may have tried one or two other nice little things on the table (Strasbourg pâte I know I never can resist, and am convinced it is perfectly wholesome). I could see my own sweet face in the mirror opposite, and my gills were as rosy as any broiled salmon. "Well-well!" I thought, as the barrister disappeared on the roof of the coach, "he has domus and placens uxor—but is she placens? Placetne to walk about all night with a roaring baby? Is it pleasing to go to bed after a long hard day's work, and have your wife nagging you because she has not been invited to the Lady Chancelloress's soirée, or what not? Suppose the Glorvina whom you loved so had been yours? Her eyebrows looked as if they could scowl, her eyes as if they could flash with anger. Remember what a slap she gave the little knife-boy for upsetting the butter-boat over her tabinet. Suppose parvulus aulâ, a little Batchelor your son, who had the toothache all night in your bedroom?" These thoughts passed rapidly through my mind as I helped myself to the comfortable meal before me. "I say, what a lot of muffins you're eating!" cried innocent Master Lovel. Now the married, the wealthy, the prosperous Biddlecombe only took his wretched scrap of dry toast. "Aha!" you say, "this man is consoling himself after his misfortune." O churl! and do you grudge me consolation? "Thank you, dear Miss Prior. Another cup, and plenty of cream, if you please." Of course, Lady Baker was not at table when I said, "Dear Miss Prior," at breakfast. Before her ladyship I was as mum as a mouse. Elizabeth found occasion to whisper to me during the day, in her demure way: "This is a very rare occasion. Lady B-never allows me to breakfast alone with Mr. Lovel, but has taken her extra nap, I suppose, because

you and Mr. and Mrs. Biddlecombe were here."

Now it may be that one of the double doors of the room which I inhabited was occasionally open, and that Mr. Batchelor's eyes and ears are uncommonly quick, and note a number of things which less observant persons would never regard or discover; but out of this room, which I occupied for some few days, now and subsequently, I looked forth as from a little ambush upon the proceedings of the house, and got a queer little insight into the history and characters of the personages round about me. The two grandmothers of Lovel's children were domineering over that easy gentleman, as women-not grandmothers merely, but sisters, wives, aunts, daughters, when the chance is given them - will domineer. Ah! Glorvina, what a gray mare you might have become had you chosen Mr. Batchelor for your consort! (But this I only remark with a parenthetic sigh.) The two children had taken each the side of a grandmamma, and whilst Master Pop was declared by his maternal grandmother to be a Baker all over, and taught to despise sugar-baking and trade, little Cecilia was Mrs. Bonnington's favorite, repeated Watt's hymns with fervent precocity; declared that she would marry none but a clergyman; preached infantine sermons to her brother and maid about worldliness; and somewhat wearied me, if the truth must be told, by the intense self-respect with which she regarded her own virtues. The old ladies had that love for each other, which one may imagine that their relative positions would engender. Over the bleeding and helpless bodies of Lovel and his worthy and kind stepfather, Mr. Bonnington, they skirmished, and fired shots at each other. Lady B—— would give hints about second marriages, and second families, and so forth, which of course made Mrs. Bonnington wince. Mrs. B- had the better of Lady Baker, in consequence of the latter's notorious pecuniary irregularities. She had never had recourse to her son's purse, she could thank heaven. She was not afraid of meeting any tradesman in Putney or London : she had never been ordered out of the house in the late Cecilia's lifetime: she could go to Boulogne and enjoy the fresh air there. This was the terrific whip she had over Baker. Lady B-, I regret to say, in consequence of the failure ci remittances, had been locked up in prison, just at a time when she was in a state of violent quarrel with her late daughter, and good Mr. Bonnington had helped her out of durance. How did I know this? Bedford, Lovel's factotum, told me: and how the old ladies were fighting like two cats.

There was one point on which the two ladies agreed. A very wealthy widower, young still, good-looking, and goodtempered, we know can sometimes find a dear woman to console his loneliness, and protect his motherless children. From the neighboring Heath, from Wimbledon, Roehampton, Barnes, Mortlake, Richmond, Esher, Walton, Windsor, nay, Reading, Bath, Exeter, and Penzance itself, or from any other quarter of Britain, over which your fancy may please to travel, families would have come ready with dear young girls to take charge of that man's future happiness; but it is a fact that these two dragons kept all women off from their ward. An unmarried woman, with decent good looks, was scarce ever allowed to enter Shrublands gate. If such an one appeared, Lovel's two mothers sallied out, and crunched her hapless bones. Once or twice he dared to dine with his neighbors, but the ladies led him such a life that the poor creature gave up the practice, and faintly announced his preference for home. "My dear Batch," says he, "what do I care for the dinners of the people round about? Has any one of them got a better cook or better wine than mine? When I come home from business, it is an intolerable nuisance to have to dress and go out seven or eight miles to cold entrées, and loaded claret, and sweet port. I can't stand it, sir. I won't stand it" (and he stamps his foot in a resolute manner). "Give me an easy life, a wine merchant I can trust, and my own friends, by my own fireside. Shall we have some more? We can manage another bottle between us three, Mr. Bonnington?"

"Well," says Mr. Bonnington, winking at the ruby goblet, "I am sure I have no objection, Frederick, to another bo——"

"Coffee is served, sir, cries Bedford, entering.

"Well—well, perhaps we have had enough," says worthy Bonnington.

"We have had enough; we all drink too much," says Lovel,

briskly. "Come in to coffee."

We go to the drawing-room. Fred and I, and the two ladies, sit down to a rubber, whilst Miss Prior plays a piece of Beethoven to a slight warbling accompaniment from Mr. Bonnington's handsome nose, who has fallen asleep over the newspaper. During our play, Bessy glides out of the room—a gray shadow. Bonnington wakens up when the tray is brought in. Lady Baker likes that good old custom: it was always the fashion at the Castle, and she takes a good glass of negus too; and so do we all; and the conversation is pretty merry, and Fred Lovel hopes I shall sleep better to-night, and is very

facetious about poor Biddlecombe, and the way in which that eminent Q. C. is henpecked by his wife.

From my bachelor's room, then, on the ground floor; or from my solitary walks in the garden, whence I could oversee many things in the house; or from Bedford's communications to me, which were very friendly, curious, and unreserved; or from my own observation, which I promise you can see as far into the millstones of life as most folks, I grew to find the mysteries of Shrublands no longer mysterious to me; and, like another *Diable Boiteux*, had the roofs of a pretty number of the Shrublands rooms taken off for me.

For instance, on that very first day of my stay, whilst the family were attiring themselves for dinner, I chanced to find two secret cupboards of the house unlocked, and the contents unveiled to me. Pinhorn, the children's maid, a giddy little flirting thing in a pink ribbon, brought some articles of the toilette into my worship's apartment, and as she retired did not shut the door behind her. I might have thought that pert little head had never been made to ache by any care; but ah! black care sits behind the horseman as Horace remarks, and not only behind the horseman, but behind the footman; and not only on the footman, but on the buxom shoulders of the lady's-maid. So with Pinhorn. You surely have remarked respecting domestic servants that they address you in a tone utterly affected and unnatural-adopting, when they are amongst each other, voices and gestures entirely different to those which their employers see and hear. Now, this little Pinhorn, in her occasional intercourse with your humble servant, had a brisk, quick, fluttering toss of the head, and a frisky manner, no doubt capable of charming some persons. As for me, ancillary allurements have, I own, had but small temptations. If Venus brought me a bedroom candle and a jug of hot water, I should give her sixpence, and no more. Having, you see, given my all to one wom-Psha! never mind that old story.—Well, I dare say this little creature may have been a flirt, but I took no more notice of her than if she had been a coal-scuttle.

Now, suppose she was a flirt. Suppose, under a mask of levity, she hid a profound sorrow. Do you suppose she was the first woman who has done so? Do you suppose because she has fifteen pounds a year, her tea, sugar, and beer, and told fibs to her masters and mistresses, she has not a heart? She went out of the room, absolutely coaxing and leering at me as she departed, with a great counterpane over her arm;

but in the next apartment I heard her voice quite changed, and another changed voice too-though not so much altered-interrogating her. My friend Dick Bedford's voice, in addressing those whom Fortune had pleased to make his superiors, was gruff and brief. He seemed to be anxious to deliver himself of his speech to you as quickly as possible; and his tone always seemed to hint, "There-there is my message, and I have delivered it; but you know perfectly well that I am as good as you." And so he was, and so I always admitted: so even the trembling, believing, flustering, suspicious Lady Baker herself admitted, when she came into communication with this man. I have thought of this little Dick as of Swift at Sheen hard by, with Sir William Temple: or Spartacus when he was as yet the servant of the fortunate Roman gentleman who owned him. Now if Dick was intelligent, obedient, useful, only not rebellious, with his superiors, I should fancy that amongst his equals he was by no means pleasant company, and that most of them hated him for his arrogance, his honesty, and his scorn of them all.

But women do not always hate a man for scorning and despising them. Women do not revolt at the rudeness and arrogance of us their natural superiors. Women, if properly trained, come down to heel at the master's bidding, and lick the hand that has been often raised to hit them. I do not say the brave little Dick Bedford ever raised an actual hand to this poor serving-girl, but his tongue whipped her, his behavior trampled on her, and she cried, and came to him whenever he lifted a finger. Psha! Don't tell me. If you want a quiet, contented, orderly home, and things comfortable about you, that is the way you must manage your women.

Well, Bedford happens to be in the next room. It is the morning-room at Shrublands. You enter the dining-room from it, and they are in the habit of laying out the dessert there, before taking it in for dinner. Bedford is laying out his dessert as Pinhorn enters from my chamber, and he begins upon her with a sarcastic sort of grunt, and a "Ho! suppose you've

been making up to B., have you?"

"Oh, Mr. Bedford, you know very well who it is I cares for!" she says, with a sigh.

"Bother!" Mr. B. remarks.

"Well, Richard, then!" (here she weeps.)

"Leave go my 'and !—leave go my a-hand, I say!" (What could she have been doing to cause this exclamation?)

"Oh, Richard, it's not your 'and I want—it's your ah-ah-art.

"Mary Pinhorn," exclaims the other, "what's the use of going on with this game? You know we couldn't be a happy together—you know your ideers ain't no good, Mary. It ain't your fault. I don't blame you for it, my dear. Some people are born clever, some are born tall: I ain't tall."

"Oh, you're tall enough for me, Richard!"

Here Richard again found reason to cry out: "Don't, I say! Suppose Baker was to come in and find you squeezing of my hand in this way? I say, some people are born with big brains, Miss Pinhorn, and some with big figures. Look at that ass, Bulkeley, Lady B.'s man! He is as big as a Life-Guardsman, and he has no more education, and no more ideas, than the beef he feeds on."

"La! Richard, whatever do you mean?"

"Pooh! How should you know what I mean? Lay them books straight. Put the volumes together, stupid! and the papers, and get the table ready for nursery tea, and don't go on there mopping your eyes, and making a fool of yourself,

Mary Pinhorn!"

"Oh, your heart is a stone—a stone—a stone!" cries Mary, in a burst of tears. "And I wish it was hung round my neck, and I was at the bottom of the well, and—there's the hup stairs bell!" with which signal I suppose Mary disappeared, for I only heard a sort of grunt from Mr. Bedford; then the clatter of a dish or two, the wheeling of chairs and furniture, and then came a brief silence, which lasted until the entry of Dick's subordinate, Buttons, who laid the children's and Miss Prior's tea.

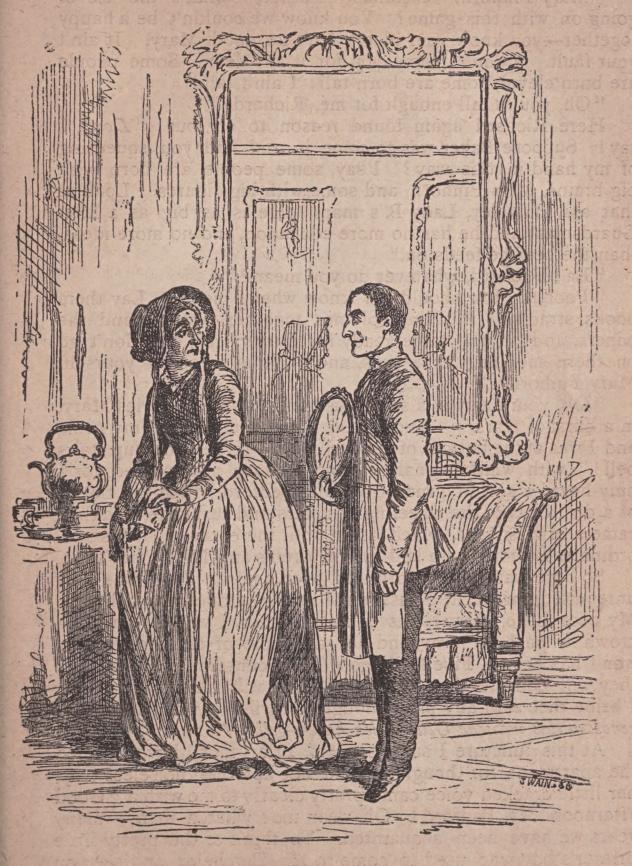
So here was an old story told over again. Here was love unrequited, and a little passionate heart wounded and unhappy. My poor little Mary! As I am a sinner, I will give thee a crown when I go away, and not a couple of shillings, as my won't has been. Five shillings will not console thee much, but they will console thee a little. Thou wilt not imagine that I bribe thee with any privy thought of evil? Away? Ich habe genossen das irdische Glück—ich habe—geliebt!

At this juncture I suppose Mrs. Prior must have entered the apartment, for though I could not hear her noiseless step, her little cracked voice came pretty clearly to me with a "Good afternoon, Mr. Bedford! Oh, dear me! what a many—many years we have been acquainted. To think of the pretty little printer's boy who used to come to Mr. Batchelor, and see you

grown such a fine man!"

Bedford.—"How? I'm only five foot four."

Mrs. P.—"But such a fine figure, Bedford! You are—now



"WHERE THE SUGAR GOES."

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indeed you are! Well, you are strong and I am weak. You are well, and I am weary and faint."

Bedford.—"The tea's a coming directly, Mrs. Prior."

Mrs. P.—"Could you give me a glass of water first—and perhaps a little sherry in it, please. Oh, thank you. How good it is! How it revives a poor old wretch!—and your cough, Bedford? How is your cough? I have brought you some lozenges for it—some of Sir Henry Halford's own prescribing for my dear husband, and—"

Bedford (abruptly) .- "I must go-never mind the cough

now, Mrs. P."

Mrs. Prior.— "What's here? almonds and raisins, macaroons, preserved apricots, biscuits for dessert—and—la bless the man! how you sta—artled me!"

Bedford.—"Don't! Mrs. Prior: I beg and implore of you, keep your 'ands out of the dessert. I can't stand it. I must

tell the governor if this game goes on."

Mrs. P.—"Ah! Mr. Bedford, it is for my poor—poor child at home: the doctor recommended her apricots. Ay, indeed,

dear Bedford; he did, for her poor chest!"

Bedford.—"And I'm blest if you haven't been at the sherry-bottle again! Oh, Mrs. P., you drive me wild—you do. I can't see Lovel put upon in this way. You know it's only last week I whopped the boy for stealing the sherry, and 'twas you done it."

Mrs. Prior (passionately). - "For a sick child, Bedford.

What won't a mother do for her sick child?"

Bedford.—"Your children's always sick. You're always taking things for 'em. I tell you, by the laws, I won't and

mustn't stand it, Mrs. P."

Mrs. Prior (with much spirit).—"Go and tell your master, Bedford! Go and tell tales of me, sir. Go and have me dismissed out of this house. Go and have my daughter dismissed out of this house, and her poor mother brought to disgrace."

Bedford.—" Mrs. Prior—Mrs. Prior! you have been a taking the sherry. A glass I don't mind; but you've been a bringing

that bottle again."

Mrs. P. (whimpering).—"It's for Charlotte, Bedford! my poor delicate angel of a Shatty! she's ordered it, indeed she is!"

Bedford.—"Confound your Shatty! I can't stand it, I

mustn't, and won't, Mrs. P.!"

Here a noise and clatter of other persons arriving interrupted the conversation between Lovel's major-domo and the mother of the children's governess, and I presently heard master Pop's voice saying, "You're going to tea with us, Mrs. Prior?"

Mrs. P.—"Your kind dear grandmammas have asked me,

dear Master Popham."

Pop.—"But you'd like to go to dinner best, wouldn't you? I dare say you have doosid bad dinners at your house. Haven't you, Mrs. Prior?"

Cissy.—"Don't say doosid. It's a naughty word, Popham!"

Pop.—"I will say doosid. Doo-oo-oosid! There! And I'll say worse words too, if I please, and you hold your tongue. What's there for tea? jam for tea? strawberries for tea? muffins for tea? That's it: strawberries and muffins for tea. And we'll go in to dessert besides: that's prime. I say, Miss Prior?"

Miss Prior .- "What do you say, Popham?"

Pop.—"Shouldn't you like to go in to dessert?—there's lots of good things there,—and have wine. Only when grandmamma tells her story about my grandfather and King George the what-d'ye-call-'im: King George the Fourth—"

Cis.—" Ascended the throne, 1820; died at Windsor, 1830."

Pop.—"Bother Windsor! Well, when she tells that story, I can tell you that ain't very good fun."

Cis.—" And it's rude of you to speak in that way of your

grandmamma, Pop!"

Pop.—"And you'll hold your tongue, Miss! And I shall speak as I like. And I'm a man, and I-don't want any of your stuff and nonsense. I say, Mary, give us the marmalade!"

Cis.—"You have had plenty to eat, and boys oughtn't to

have so much."

Pop.—"Boys may have what they like. Boys can eat twice as much as women. There, I don't want any more. Anybody may have the rest."

.Mrs. Prior.—"What nice marmalade! I know some chil-

dren, my dears, who-"

Miss. P. (imploringly).—" Mamma, I beseech you—"

Mrs. P.—"I know three dear children who very—very seldom have nice marmalade and delicious cake."

Pop.—"I know whom you mean: you mean Augustus, and Frederick, and Fanny—your children? Well, they shall have marmalade and cake."

Cis.—" Oh, yes, I will give them all mine."

Pop. (who speaks, I think, as if his mouth was full).—"I won't give 'em mine: but they can have another pot, you know.

You have always got a basket with you; you know you have,

Mrs. Prior. You had it the day you took the cold fowl."

Mrs. P.—"For the poor blind black man! Oh, how thankful he was to his dear young benefactors! He is a man and a brother, and to help him was most kind of you, dear Master Popham!"

Pop.—"That black beggar my brother? He ain't my

brother."

Mrs. P.—"No, dears, you have both the most lovely complexions in the world."

Pop.—"Bother complexions! I say, Mary, another pot of

marmalade."

Mary.—"I don't know, Master Pop—"

Pop.—"I will have it, I say. If you don't I'll smash everything, I will."

Cis.—"Oh, you naughty, rude boy!"

Pop.—" Hold your tongue, stupid! I will have it, I say."

Mrs. P.—"Do humor him, Mary, please. And I'm sure

my dear children at home will be better for it."

Pop.—"There's your basket. Now put this cake in, and this bit of butter, and this sugar on the top of the butter. Hurray! hurray! Oh, what jolly fun! Here's some cake—no, I think I'll keep that; and, Mrs. Prior, tell Gus, and Fanny, and Fred, I sent it to 'em, and they shall never want for anything as long as Frederick Popham Baker Lovel, Esquire, can give it them. Did Gus like my gray great-coat that I didn't want?"

Miss P .- "You did not give him your new great-coat?"

Pop.—"It was beastly ugly, and I did give it him; and I'll give him this if I choose. And don't you speak to me; I'm going to school, and I ain't going to have no governesses soon."

Mrs. Prior.—"Ah, dear child! what a nice coat it is; and

how well my poor boy looks in it!"

Miss Prior.—"Mother, mother! I implore you—mother—!"

Mr. Lovel enters.—"So the children at high tea! How d'yedo, Mrs. Prior? I think we shall be able to manage that little matter for your second boy, Mrs. Prior."

Mrs. Prior.—" Heaven bless you,—bless you, my dear, kind benefactor! Don't prevent me, Elizabeth: I must kiss his

hand. There!"

And here the second bell rings, and I enter the morning-room, and can see Mrs. Prior's great basket propped cunningly under the tablecloth. Her basket?—her porte-manteau, her porte-bouteille, her porte-gâteau, her porte-pantalon, her porte-butin

in general. Thus I could see that every day Mrs. Prior visited Shrublands she gleaned greedily of the harvest. Well, Boaz

was rich, and this ruthless Ruth was hungry and poor.

At the welcome summons of the second bell, Mr. and Mrs. Bonnington also made their appearance; the latter in the new cap which Mrs. Prior had admired, and which she saluted with a nod of smiling recognition: "Dear madam, it is lovely—I told you it was," whispers Mrs. P., and the wearer of the blue ribbons turned her bonny, good-natured face towards the looking-glass, and I hope saw no reason to doubt Mrs. Prior's sincerity. As for Bonnington, I could perceive that he had been taking a little nap before dinner,—a practice by which the appetite is improved, I think, and the intellect prepared for the bland prandial conversation.

"Have the children been quite good?" asks papa, of the

governess.

"There are worse children, sir," says Miss Prior, meekly.

"Make haste and have your dinner; we are coming in to

dessert!" cries Pop.

"You would not have us go to dine without your grandmother?" papa asks. Dine without Lady Baker, indeed! I should have liked to see him go to dinner without Lady Baker.

Pending her ladyship's arrival, papa and Mr. Bonnington walk to the open window, and gaze on the lawn and the towers of Putney rising over the wall.

"Ah, my good Mrs. Prior," cries Mrs. Bonnington, "those

grandchildren of mine are sadly spoiled."

"Not by you, dear madam," says Mrs. Prior, with a look of commiseration. "Your dear children at home are, I am sure, perfect models of goodness. Is Master Edward well, ma'am? and Master Robert, and Master Richard, and dear funny little Master William? Ah, what blessings those children are to you! If a certain wilful little nephew of theirs took after them!"

"The little naughty wretch!" cried Mrs. Bonnington; "do you know, Prior, my grandson Frederick—(I don't know why they call him Popham in this house, or why he should be ashamed of his father's name)—do you know that Popham spilt the ink over my dear husband's bands, which he keeps in his great dictionary, and fought with my Richard, who is three years older than Popham, and actually beat his own uncle!"

"Gracious goodness!" I cried; "you don't mean to say, ma'am, that Pop has been laying violent hands upon his venerable relative?" I feel ever so gentle a pull at my coat. Was it Miss Prior who warned me not to indulge in the sarcastic

method with good Mrs. Bonnington?

"I don't know why you call my poor child a venerable relative?" Mrs. B. remarks. "I know that Popham was very rude to him: and then Robert came to his brother, and that graceless little Popham took a stick, and my husband came out, and do you know Popham Lovel actually kicked Mr. Bonnington on the shins, and butted him like a little naughty ram; and if you think such conduct is a subject for ridicule—I don't, Mr. Batchelor."

"My dear—dear lady!" I cried, seizing her hand; for she was going to cry, and in woman's eye the unanswerable tear always raises a deuce of a commotion in my mind. "I would not for the world say a word that should willingly vex you; and as for Popham, I give you my honor, I think nothing would do

that child so much good as a good whipping."

"He is spoiled, madam; we know by whom," says Mrs. Prior. "Dear Lady Baker! how that red does become your "ladyship." In fact, Lady B. sailed in at this juncture, arrayed in ribbons of scarlet; with many brooches, bangles, and other gimeracks ornamenting her plenteous person. And now her ladyship having arrived, Bedford announced that dinner was served, and Lovel gave his mother-in-law an arm, whilst I offered mine to Mrs. Bonnington to lead her to the adjoining dining-room. And the pacable kind soul speedily made peace with me. And we ate and drank of Lovel's best. And Lady Baker told us her celebrated anecdote of George the Fourth's compliment to her late dear husband, Sir Popham, when his Majesty visited Ireland. Mrs. Prior and her basket were gone when we repaired to the drawing-room: having been hunting all day, the hungry mother had returned with her prey to her wide-mouthed birdikins. Elizabeth looked very pale and handsome, reading at her lamp. And whist and the little tray finished the second day at Shrublands.

I paced the moonlit walk alone when the family had gone to rest; and smoked my cigar under the tranquil stars. I had been some thirty hours in the house, and what a queer little drama was unfolding itself before me! What struggles and passions were going on here—what certamina and motus animorum! Here was Lovel, this willing horse; and what a crowd of relations, what a heap of luggage had the honest fellow to carry! How that little Mrs. Prior was working, and scheming, and tacking, and flattering, and fawning, and plundering, to be sure! And that serene Elizabeth, with what consummate skill, art, and prudence, had she to act, to keep her place with two such rivals reigning over her. And Elizabeth not only kept her

place, but she actually was liked by those two women! Why, Elizabeth Prior, my wonder and respect for thee increase with every hour during which I contemplate thy character! How is it that you live with those lionesses, and are not torn to pieces? What sops of flattery do you cast to them to appease them? Perhaps I do not think my Elizabeth brings up her two children very well, and, indeed, have seldom become acquainted with young people more odious. But is the fault hers, or is it Fortune's spite? How, with these two grandmothers spoiling the children alternately, can the governess do better than she does? How has she managed to lull their natural jealousy? I will work out that intricate problem, that I will, ere many days are over. And there are other mysteries which I perceive. There is poor Mary breaking her heart for the butler. That butler, why does he connive at the rogueries of Mrs. Prior? Ha! herein lies a mystery too; and I vow I will penetrate it ere long. So saying, I fling away the butt-end of the fragrant companion of my solitude, and enter into my room by the open French window just as Bedford walks in at the door. I had heard the voice of that worthy domestic warbling a grave melody from his pantry window as I paced the lawn. When the family goes to rest, Bedford passes a couple of hours in study in his pantry, perusing the newspapers and the new works, and forming his opinion on books and politics. Indeed I have reason to believe that the letters in the Putney Herald and Mortlake Monitor, signed "A Voice from the Basement," were Mr. Bedford's composition.

"Come to see all safe for the night, sir, and the windows closed before you turn in," Mr. Dick remarks. "Best not leave 'em open, even if you are asleep inside—catch cold—many bad people about. Remember Bromley murder!—Enter at French windows—you cry out—cut your throat—and there's

a fine paragraph for papers next morning!"

"What a good voice you have, Bedford," I say; "I heard

you warbling just now—a famous bass, on my word!"

"Always fond of music—sing when I'm cleaning my plate—learned in Old Beak Street. *She* used to teach me," and he points towards the upper floors.

"What a little chap you were then !- when you came for

my proofs for the Museum," I remark.

"I ain't a very big one now, sir; but it ain't the big ones that do the best work," remarks the butler.

"I remember Miss Prior saying that you were as old as she was."

"Hm! and I scarce came up to her—eh—elbow." (Bedford had constantly to do battle with the aspirates. He conquered them, but you could see there was a struggle.)

" And it was Miss Prior taught you to sing?" I say, looking

him full in the face.

He dropped his eyes—he could not bear my scrutiny. I

knew the whole story now.

"When Mrs. Lovel died at Naples, Miss Prior brought home the children, and you acted as courier to the whole

party?"

"Yes, sir," says Bedford. "We had the carriage, and of course poor Mrs. L. was sent home by sea, and I brought home the young ones, and—and the rest of the family. I could say, Avanti! avanti! to the Italian postilions, and ask for des chevaux when we crossed the Halps—the Alps,—I beg your pardon, sir."

"And you used to see the party to their rooms at the inns, and call them up in the morning, and you had a blunderbuss

in the rumble to shoot the robbers?"

"Yes," says Bedford.

"And it was a pleasant time?"

"Yes," says Bedford, groaning, and hanging down his mis-

"Oh, yes, it was a pleasant time." erable head.

He turned away; he stamped his foot; he gave a sort of imprecation; he pretended to look at some books, and dust them with a napkin which he carried. I saw the matter at once. "Poor Dick!" says I.

"It's the old—old story," says Dick. "It's you and the Hirish girl over again, sir. I'm only a servant, I know; but I'm a —. Confound it!" And here he stuck his fists into his eyes.

"And this is the reason you allow old Mrs. Prior to steal

the sherry and the sugar?" I ask.

"How do you know that :--you remember how she prigged in Beak Street?" asks Bedford, fiercely.

"I overheard you and her just before dinner," I said.

"You had better go and tell Lovel-have me turned out of the house. That's the best thing that can be done," cries Bedford again, fiercely, stamping his feet.

"It is always my custom to do as much mischief as I pos-

sibly can, Dick Bedford," I say, with fine irony.

He seizes my hand. "No, you're a trump—everybody knows that; beg pardon, sir; but you see I'm so—so—dash!
—miserable, that I hardly know whether I'm walking on my head or my heels."

'You haven't succeeded in touching her heart, then, my

poor Dick?" I said.

Dick shook his head. "She has no heart," he said. "It she ever had any, that fellar in India took it away with him. She don't care for anybody alive. She likes me as well as any one. I think she appreciates me, you see, sir; she can't 'elp it -I'm blest if she can. She knows I am a better man than most of the chaps that come down here,—I am, if I wasn't a servant. If I were only an apothecary-like that grinning jackass who comes here from Barnes in his gig, and wants to marry her—she'd have me. She keeps him on, and encourages him-she can do that cleverly enough. And the old dragon fancies she is fond of him. Psha! Why am I making a fool of myself?-I am only a servant. Mary's good enough for me; she'll have me fast enough. I beg your pardon, sir; I am making a fool of myself; I ain't the first, sir. Good night, sir; hope you'll sleep well." And Dick departs to his pantry and his private cares, and I think, "Here is another victim who is writhing under the merciless arrows of the universal torturer."

"He is a very singular person," Miss Prior remarked to me, as, next day, I happened to be walking on Putney Heath by her side, while her young charges trotted on and quarrelled in the distance. "I wonder where the world will stop next, dear Mr. Batchelor, and how far the march of intellect will proceed! Any one so free, and easy, and cool, as this Mr. Bedford I never saw. When we were abroad with poor Mrs. Lovel, he picked up French and Italian in quite a surprising way. He takes books down from the library now: the most abstruse works—works that I couldn't pretend to read, I'm sure. Mr. Bonnington says he has taught himself history, and Horace in Latin, and algebra, and I don't know what besides. He talked to the servants and tradespeople at Naples much better than I could, I assure you." And Elizabeth tosses up her head heavenwards, as if she would ask of yonder skies how such a man could possibly be as good as herself.

She stepped along the Heath—slim, stately, healthy, tall her firm, neat foot treading swiftly over the grass. She wore her blue spectacles, but I think she could have looked at the sun without the glasses and without wincing. That sun was playing with her tawny, wavy ringlets, and scattering gold-dust

"It is wonderful," said I, admiring her, "how these people

give themselves airs, and try to imitate their betters!"

"Most extraordinary!" says Bessy. She had not one particle of humor in all her composition. I think Dick Bedford was right; and she had no heart. Well, she had famous lungs, health, appetite, and with these one may get through life not uncomfortably.

"You and Saint Cecilia got on pretty well, Bessy?" I ask.

"Saint who?"

"The late Mrs. L."

"Oh, Mrs. Lovel:—yes. What an odd person you are! I did not understand whom you meant," says Elizabeth the downright.

"Not a good temper, I should think? She and Fred

fought?"

"He never fought."

"I think a little bird has told me that she was not averse to the admiration of our sex?"

"I don't speak ill of my friends, Mr. Batchelor," replies

Elizabeth the prudent.

"You must have difficult work with the two old ladies at Shrublands?"

Bessy shrugs her shoulders. "A little management is necessary in all families," she says. "The ladies are naturally a little jealous one of the other; but they are both of them not unkind to me in the main; and I have to bear no more than other women in my situation. It was not all pleasure at St. Boniface, Mr. Batchelor, with my uncle and aunt. I suppose all governesses have their difficulties: and I must get over mine as best I can, and be thankful for the liberal salary which your kindness procured for me, and which enables me to help my poor mother and my brothers and sisters."

"I suppose you give all your money to her?"

"Nearly all. They must have it; poor mamma has so many mouths to feed."

"And notre petit cœur, Bessy?" I ask, looking in her fresh

face. "Have we replaced the Indian officer?"

Another shrug of the shoulders. "I suppose we all get over those follies, Mr. Batchelor. I remember somebody else was in a sad way too,"—and she looks askance at the victim of Glorvina. "My folly is dead and buried long ago. I have to work so hard for mamma, and my brothers and sisters, that I have no time for such nonsense."

Here a gentleman in a natty gig, with a high-trotting horse, came spanking towards us over the common, and with my profound knowledge of human nature, I saw at once that the servant by the driver's side was a little doctor's boy, and the gentleman himself was a neat and trim general practitioner.

He stared at me grimly, as he made a bow to Miss Bessy.

I saw jealousy and suspicion in his aspect.

"Thank you, dear Mr. Drencher," says Bessy, "for your kindness to mamma and our children. You are going to call at Shrublands? Lady Baker was indisposed this morning. She says when she can't have Dr. Piper, there's nobody like you." And this artful one smiles blandly on Mr. Drencher.

"I have got the workhouse, and a case at Roehampton, and I shall be at Shrublands about two, Miss Prior," says that young Doctor, whom Bedford had called a grinning jackass. He laid an eager emphasis on the two. Go to! I know what two and two means as well as most people, Mr. Drencher! Glances of rage he shot at me from out his gig. The serpents of that miserable Æsculapius unwound themselves from his rod, and were gnawing at his swollen heart!

"He has a good practice, Mr. Drencher?" I ask, sly rogue

as I am.

"He is very good to mamma and our children. His practice with them does not profit him much," says Bessy.

"And I suppose our walk will be over before two o'clock?"

remarks that slyboots who is walking with Miss Prior.

"I hope so. Why, it is our dinner-time; and this walk on

the Heath does make one so hungry!" cries the governess.

"Bessy Prior," I said, "it is my belief that you no more want spectacles than a cat in the twilight." To which she replied, that I was such a strange, odd man, she really could not understand me.

We were back at Shrublands at two. Of course we must not keep the children's dinner waiting: and of course Mr. Drencher drove up at five minutes past two, with his gig-horse all in a lather. I, who knew the secrets of the house, was amused to see the furious glances which Bedford darted from the sideboard, or as he served the Doctor with cutlets. Drencher, for his part, scowled at me. I, for my part, was easy, witty, pleasant, and I trust profoundly wicked and malicious. I bragged about my aristocratic friends to Lady Baker. I trumped her old-world stories about George the Fourth at Dublin with the latest dandified intelligence I had learned at the club. That the young Doctor should be dazzled and disgusted was, I own, my wish; and I enjoyed his rage as I saw him choking with jealousy over his victuals.

But why was Lady Baker sulky with me? How came it, my fashionable stories had no effect upon that polite matron? Yesterday at dinner she had been gracious enough: and turn-

ing her back upon those poor simple Bonningtons, who knew nothing of the beau monde at all, had condescended to address herself specially to me several times with an "I need not tell you, Mr. Batchelor, that the Duchess of Dorsetshire's maiden name was De Bobus;" or, "You know very well that the etiquette at the Lord Lieutenant's balls, at Dublin Castle, is for the wives of baronets to "—&c., &c.

Now whence, I say, did it arise that Lady Baker, who had been kind and familiar with me on Sunday, should on Monday turn me a shoulder as cold as that lamb which I offered to carve for the family, and which remained from yesterday's quarter? I had thought of staying but two days at Shrublands. I generally am bored at country-houses. I was going away on the Monday morning, but Lovel, when he and I and the children and Miss Prior breakfasted together before he went to business, pressed me to stay so heartily and sincerely that I agreed, gladly enough, to remain. I could finish a scene or two of my tragedy at my leisure; besides, there were one or two little comedies going on in the house which inspired me with no little curiosity.

Lady Baker growled at me, then, during lunch-time. She addressed herself in whispers and hints to Mr. Drencher. She had in her own man Bulkeley, and bullied him. She desired to know whether she was to have the barouche or not: and when informed that it was at her ladyship's service, said it was a great deal too cold for the open carriage, and that she would have the brougham. When she was told that Mr. and Mrs. Bonnington had impounded the brougham, she said she had no idea of people taking other people's carriages: and when Mr. Bedford remarked that her ladyship had her choice that morning, and had chosen the barouche, she said, "I didn't speak to you, sir; and I will thank you not to address me until you are spoken to!" She made the place so hot that I began to wish I had quitted it.

"And pray, Miss Prior, where is Captain Baker to sleep," she asked, "now that the ground-floor room is engaged?"

Miss Prior meekly said, "Captain Baker would have the

pink room."

"The room on my landing-place, without double doors? Impossible! Clarence is always smoking. Clarence will fill the whole house with his smoke. He shall not sleep in the pink room. I expected the ground-floor room for him, which—a—this gentleman persists in not vacating." And the dear creature looked me full in the face.

"This gentleman smokes, too, and is so comfortable where he is, that he proposes to remain there," I say, with a bland smile.

"Haspic of plovers' eggs, sir," says Bedford, handing a dish over my back. And he actually gave me a little dig, and growled, "Go it-give it her!"

"There is a capital inn on the Heath," I continue, peeling one of my opal favorites. "If Captain Baker must smoke, he

may have a room there."

"Sir! my son does not live at inns," cries Lady Baker.
"Oh, grandma!" don't he though? And wasn't there a row at the 'Star and Garter;' and didn't Pa pay uncle Clarence's bill there, though?"

"Silence, Popham! Little boys should be seen and not heard," says Cissy. "Shouldn't little boys be seen and not

heard, Miss Prior?"

"They shouldn't insult their grandmothers. O my Cecilia

-my Cecilia!" cries Lady Baker, lifting her hand.

"You sha'n't hit me! I say you sha'n't hit me!" roars Pop, starting back, and beginning to square at his enraged ancestress. The scene was growing painful. And there was that rascal of a Bedford choking with suppressed laughter at the sideboard. Bulkeley, her ladyship's man, stood calm as fate; but young Buttons burst out in a guffaw; on which, I assure you, Lady Baker looked as savage as Lady Macbeth.

"Am I to be insulted by my daughter's servants?" cries

Lady Baker. "I will leave the house this instant."

"At what hour will your ladyship have the barouche?" says

Bedford, with perfect gravity.

If Mr. Drencher had whipped out a lancet and bled Lady B--- on the spot, he would have done her good. I shall draw the curtain over this sad—this humiliating scene. Drop, little curtain! on this absurd little act.

## CHAPTER IV.

## A BLACK SHEEP.

THE being for whom my friend Dick Bedford seemed to have a special contempt and adversion, was Mr. Bulkeley, the tall footman in attendance upon Lovel's dear mother-in-law.

One of the causes of Bedford's wrath, the worthy fellow explained to me. In the servants' hall, Bulkeley was in the habit of speaking in disrespectful and satirical terms of his mistress, enlarging upon her many foibles, and describing her pecuniary difficulties to the many habitués of that second social circle at Shrublands. The hold which Mr. Bulkeley had over his lady lay in a long unsettled account of wages, which her ladyship was quite disinclined to discharge. And, in spite of this insolvency, the footman must have found his profit in the place, for he continued to hold it from year to year, and to fatten on his earnings, such as they were. My lady's dignity did not allow her to travel without this huge personage in her train; and a great comfort it must have been to her, to reflect that in all the country-houses which she visited (and she would go wherever she could force an invitation), her attendant freely explained himself regarding her peculiarities, and made his brother servants aware of his mistress's embarrassed condition. And yet the woman, whom I suppose no soul alive respected (unless, haply, she herself had a hankering delusion that she was a respectable woman), thought that her position in life forbade her to move abroad without a maid, and this hulking incumbrance in plush; and never was seen anywhere, in watering-place, country-house, hotel, unless she was so attended.

Between Bedford and Bulkeley, then, there was feud and mutual hatred. Bedford chafed the big man by constant sneers and sarcasms, which penetrated the other's dull hide, and caused him frequently to assert that he would punch Dick's ugly head off. The housekeeper had frequently to interpose, and fling her matronly arms between these men of war; and perhaps Bedford was forced to be still at times, for Bulkeley was nine inches taller than himself, and was perpetually bragging of his skill and feats as a bruiser. This sultan may also have wished to fling his pocket-handkerchief to Miss Mary Pinhorn, who, though she loved Bedford's wit and cleverness, might also be not insensible to the magnificent chest, calves, whiskers, of Mr. Bulkeley. On this delicate subject, however, I can't speak. The men hated each other. You have, no doubt, remarked in your experience of life, that when men do hate each other, about a woman, or some other cause, the real reason is never assigned. You say, "The conduct of such and such a man to his grandmother—his behavior in selling that horse to Benson-his manner of brushing his hair down the middle"-or what you will, "makes him so offensive to me that I can't endure him." His verses, therefore, are mediocre; his speeches in Parliament are utter failures; his practice at the bar is dwindling every year; his powers (always small) are utterly leaving him, and he is repeating his confounded jokes until they quite nauseate. Why, only about myself, and within these three days, I read a nice little article—written in sorrow, you know, not in anger—by our eminent confrère Wiggins, deploring the decay of &c., &c. And Wiggins's little article which was not found suitable for a certain Magazine?—Allons donc! The drunkard says the pickled salmon gave him the headache; the man who hates us gives a reason, but not the reason. Bedford was angry with Bulkeley for abusing his mistress at the servants' table? Yes. But for what else besides? I don't care—nor possibly does your worship, the

exalted reader, for these low vulgar kitchen quarrels.

Out of that ground-floor room, then, I would not move in spite of the utmost efforts of my Lady Baker's broad shoulder to push me out; and with many grins that evening, Bedford complimented me on my gallantry in routing the enemy at luncheon. I think he may possibly have told his master, for Lovel looked very much alarmed and uneasy when we greeted each other on his return from the City, but became more composed when Lady Baker appeared at the second dinner-bell, without a trace on her fine countenance of that storm which had caused all her waves to heave with such commotion at noon. How finely some people, by the way, can hang up quarrels-or pop them into a drawer—as they do their work, when dinner is announced, and take them out again at a convenient season! Baker was mild, gentle, a thought sad and sentimentaltenderly interested about her dear son and daughter, in Ireland, whom she must go and see—quite easy in hand, in a word, and to the immense relief of all of us. She kissed Lovel on retiring, and prayed blessings on her Frederick. She pointed to the picture: nothing could be more melancholy or more gracious.

"She go!" says Mr. Bedford to me at night—"not she. She knows when she's well off; was obliged to turn out of Bakerstown before she came here: that brute Bulkeley told me so. She's always quarrelling with her son and his wife. Angels don't grow everywhere as they do at Putney, Mr. B.! You gave it her well to-day at lunch, you did though!" During my stay at Shrublands, Mr. Bedford paid me a regular evening visit in my room, set the carte du pays before me, and in his curt way acquainted me with the characters of the inmates of

the house, and the incidents occurring therein.

Captain Clarence Baker did not come to Shrublands on the day when his anxious mother wished to clear out my nest (and expel the amiable bird in it) for her son's benefit. I believe an important fight, which was to come off in the Essex Marshes, and which was postponed in consequence of the interposition of the county magistrates, was the occasion, or at any rate the pretext, of the Captain's delay. "He likes seeing fights better than going to 'em, the Captain does," my major-domo remarked. "His regiment was ordered to India, and he sold out : climate don't agree with his precious health. The Captain ain't been here ever so long, not since poor Mrs. L.'s time, before Miss P. came here: Captain Clarence and his sister had a tremendous quarrel together. He was up to all sorts of pranks, the Captain was. Not a good lot, by any means, I should say, Mr. Batchelor." And here Bedford begins to laugh. "Did you ever read, sir, a farce called 'Raising the Wind?' There's plenty of Jeremy Diddlers now, Captain Jeremy Diddlers and Lady Jeremy Diddlers too. Have you such a thing as half a crown about you? If you have, don't invest it in some folks' pockets-that's all. Beg your pardon, sir, if I am bothering you

with talking.

As long as I was at Shrublands, and ready to partake of breakfast with my kind host and his children and their governess, Lady Baker had her own breakfast taken to her room. But when there were no visitors in the house, she would come groaning out of her bedroom to be present at the morning meal; and not uncommonly would give the little company anecdotes of the departed saint, under whose invocation, as it were, we were assembled, and whose simpering effigy looked down upon us, over her harp, and from the wall. The eyes of the portrait followed you about, as portraits' eyes so painted will; and those glances, as it seemed to me, still domineered over Lovel, and made him quail as they had done in life. Yonder, in the corner, was Cecilia's harp with its leathern cover. I likened the skin to that drum with the dying Zisca ordered should be made out of his hide, to be beaten before the hosts of his people and inspire terror. Vous concevez, I did not say to Lovel at breakfast, as I sat before the ghostly musical instrument, "My dear fellow, that skin of Cordovan leather belonging to your defunct Cecilia's harp is like the hide which," &c.; but I confess, at first, I used to have a sort of crawly sensation, as of a sickly genteel ghost flitting about the place, in an exceedingly peevish humor, trying to scold and command, and finding her defunct voice couldn't be heard—trying to reillumine her extinguished leers and faded smiles and ogles, and finding no one admired or took note. In the gray of the gloaming, in the twilight corner where stands the shrouded companion of song—what is that white figure flickering round the silent harp? Once, as we were assembled in the room at afternoon tea, a bird, entering at the open window, perched on the instrument. Popham dashed at it. Lovel was deep in conversation upon the wine-duties with a Member of Parliament he had brought down to dinner. Lady Baker, who was, if I may use the expression, "jawing," as usual, and telling one of her tremendous stories about the Lord Lieutenant to Mr. Bonnington, took no note of the incident. Elizabeth did not seem to remark it: what was a bird on a harp to her, but a sparrow perched on a bit of leather-casing! All the ghosts in Putney churchyard might rattle all their bones, and would not frighten that stout spirit!

I was amused at a precaution which Bedford took, and somewhat alarmed at the distrust towards Lady Baker which he exhibited, when, one day on my return from town—whither I had made an excursion of four or five hours—I found my bedroom door locked, and Dick arrived with the key. "He's wrote to say he's coming this evening, and if he had come when you was away, Lady B. was capable of turning your things out, and putting his in, and taking her oath she believed you was going to leave. The long-bows Lady B. do pull are perfectly awful, Mr. B.! So it was long-bow to long-bow, Mr. Batchelor; and I said you had took the key in your pocket, not wishing to have your papers disturbed. She tried the lawn window, but I had bolted that, and the Captain will have the pink room, after all, and must smoke up the chimney. I should have liked to see him, or you, or any one do it in poor Mrs. L.'s time—I just should!"

During my visit to London, I had chanced to meet my friend Captain Fitzb—dle, who belongs to a dozen clubs, and knows something of every man in London. "Know anything of Clarence Baker?" "Of course I do," says Fitz; "and if you want any renseignement, my dear fellow, I have the honor to inform you that a blacker little sheep does not trot the London pavé. Wherever that ingenious officer's name is spoken—at Tattersall's, at his clubs, in his late regiments, in men's society, in ladies' society, in that expanding and most agreeable circle which you may call no society at all—a chorus of maledictions rises up at the mention of Baker. Know anything of Clarence Baker! My dear fellow, enough to make your hair turn white, unless (as I sometimes fondly imagine) nature has already per-

formed that process, when of course I can't pretend to act upon mere hair-dye." (The whiskers of the individual who addressed me, innocent, stared me in the face as he spoke, and were dyed of the most unblushing purple.) "Clarence Baker, sir, is a young man who would have been invaluable in Sparta as a warning against drunkenness and an exemplar of it. He has helped the regimental surgeon to some most interesting experiments in delirium tremens. He is known, and not in the least trusted, in every billiard-room in Brighton, Canterbury, York, Sheffield—on every pavement which has rung with the clink of dragoon boot-heels. By a wise system of revoking at whist he has lost games which have caused not only his partners, but his opponents and the whole club, to admire him and to distrust him: long before and since he was of age, he has written his eminent name to bills which have been dishonored, and has nobly pleaded his minority as a reason for declining to pay. From the garrison towns where he has been quartered, he has carried away not only the hearts of the milliners, but their gloves, haberdashery, and perfumery. He has had controversies with Cornet Green, regarding horse transactions; disputed turf accounts with Lieutenant Brown; and betting and backgammon differences with Captain Black. From all I have heard he is the worthy son of his admirable mother. And I bet you even on the four events, if you stay three days in a country-house with him-which appears to be your present happy idea-that he will quarrel with you, insult you, and apologize; that he will intoxicate himself more than once; that he will offer to play cards with you, and not pay on losing (if he wins, I perhaps need not state what his conduct will be); and that he will try to borrow money from you, and most likely from your servant, before he goes away." So saying, the sententious Fitz strutted up the steps of one of his many club-haunts in Pall Mall, and left me forewarned, and I trust forearmed, against Captain Clarence and all his works.

The adversary, when at length I came in sight of him, did not seem very formidable. I beheld a weakly little man with Chinese eyes, and pretty little feet and hands, whose pallid countenance told of Finishes and Casinos. His little chest and fingers were decorated with many jewels. A perfume of tobacco hung round him. His little mustache was twisted with an elaborate gummy curl. I perceived that the little hand which twirled the mustache shook woefully: and from the little chest there came a cough surprisingly loud and dismal.

He was lying on a sofa as I entered, and the children of the

house were playing round him. "If you are our uncle, why didn't you come to see us oftener?" asks Popham.

"How should I know that you were such uncommonly nice

children?" asks the Captain.

"We're not nice to you," says Popham. "Why do you cough so? Mamma used to cough. And why does your hand shake so?"

"My hand shakes because I am ill: and I cough because I'm ill. Your mother died of it, and I dare say I shall too."

"I hope you'll be good, and repent before you die, uncle,

and I will lend you some nice books," says Cecilia.

"Oh, bother books!" cries Pop.

"And I hope you'll be good, Popham," and "You hold your tongue, miss," and "I shall," and "I sha'n't," and "You're another," and "I'll tell Miss Prior,"—" Go and tell, tell-tale,"—" Boo"—"Boo"—"Boo"—"Boo"—and I don't know what more exclamations came tumultuously and rapidly from these dear children, as their uncle lay before them, a hand-kerchief to his mouth, his little feet high raised on the sofa cushions.

Captain Baker turned a little eye towards me, as I entered the room, but did not change his easy and elegant posture. When I came near to the sofa where he reposed, he was good enough to call out:

"Glass of sherry!"

"It's Mr. Batchelor; it isn't Bedford, uncle," says Cissy.

"Mr. Batchelor ain't got any sherry in his pocket: have you, Mr. Batchelor? You ain't like old Mrs. Prior, always pocketing things, are you?" cries Pop, and falls a laughing at the ludicrous idea of my being mistaken for Bedford.

"Beg your pardon. How should I know, you know?' drawls the invalid on the sofa. "Everybody's the same now,

you see."

"Sir!" says I, and "sir" was all I could say. The fact is, I could have replied with something remarkably neat and cutting, which would have transfixed the languid little jackanapes who dared to mistake me for a footman; but, you see, I only thought of my repartee some eight hours afterwards when I was lying in bed, and I am sorry to own that a great number of my best bon mots have been made in that way. So, as I had not the pungent remark ready when wanted, I can't say I said it to Captain Baker, but I dare say I turned very red, and said, "Sir!" and—and in fact that was all.

"You were goin' to say somethin'?" asked the Captain affably.

"You know my friend Mr. Fitzboodle, I believe?" said I; the fact is, I really did not know what to say.

"Some mistake—think not."

"He is a member of the 'Flag Club,'" I remarked, looking my young fellow hard in the face.

"I ain't. There's a set of cads in that club that will say

anything."

"You may not know him, sir, but he seemed to know you very well. Are we to have any tea, children?" I say, flinging myself down on an easy chair, taking up a magazine, and adopting an easy attitude, though I dare say my face was as

red as a turkey-cock's, and I was boiling over with rage.

As we had a very good breakfast and a profuse luncheon at Shrublands, of course we could not support nature till dinner-time without a five-o'clock tea; and this was the meal for which I pretended to ask. Bedford, with his silver kettle, and his buttony satellite, presently brought in this refection, and of course the children bawled out to him—

"Bedford—Bedford! uncle mistook Mr. Batchelor for you."

"I could not be mistaken for a more honest man, Pop," said I. And the bearer of the tea-urn gave me a look of gratitude and kindness which, I own, went far to restore my ruffled equanimity.

"Since you are the butler, will you get me a glass of sherry and a biscuit?" says the Captain. And Bedford, retiring,

returned presently with the wine.

The young gentleman's hand shook so, that in order to drink his wine, he had to surprise it, as it were, and seize it with his mouth, when a shake brought the glass near his lips. He drained the wine, and held out his hand for another glass. The hand was steadier now.

"You the man who was here before?" asks the Captain.
"Six years ago, when you were here, sir," says the butler.

"What! I ain't changed, I suppose?"

"Yes, you are, sir."

"Then, how the dooce do you remember me?"

"You forgot to pay me some money you borrowed of me, one pound five, sir," says Bedford, whose eyes slyly turned in

my direction.

And here, according to her wont at this meal, the dark-robed Miss Prior entered the room. She was coming forward with her ordinarily erect attitude and firm step, but paused in her walk an instant, and when she came to us, I thought, looked remarkably pale. She made a slight curtsey, and it must be

confessed that Captain Baker rose up from his sofa for a moment when she appeared. She then sat down, with her back towards him, turning towards herself the table and its tea

apparatus.

At this board my Lady Baker found us assembled when she returned from her afternoon drive. She flew to her darling reprobate of a son. She took his hand, she smoothed back his hair from his damp forehead. "My darling child," cries this fond mother, "what a pulse you have got!"

"I suppose, because I've been drinking," says the prodigal. "Why didn't you come out driving with me? The afternoon

was lovely!"

"To pay visits at Richmond? Not as I knows on, ma'am," says the invalid. "Conversation with elderly ladies about poodles, Bible societies, that kind of thing? It must be a doosid lovely afternoon that would make me like that sort of game." And here comes a fit of coughing, over which mamma ejaculates her sympathy.

"Kick—kick—killin' myself!" gasps out the Captain; "know I am. No man can lead my life, and stand it. Dyin' by inches! Dyin' by whole yards, by Jo—ho—hove, I am!" Indeed, he was as bad in health as in morals, this graceless

Captain.

"That man of Lovel's seems a d——insolent beggar," he presently and ingenuously remarks.

"Oh, uncle, you mustn't say those words!" cries niece

Cissy.

"He's a man, and may say what he likes, and so will I, when I'm a man. Yes, and I'll say it now, too, if I like," cries Master Popham.

"Not to give me pain, Popham? Will you?" asks the

governess.

On which the boy says—"Well, who wants to hurt you, Miss Prior!"

And our colloquy ends by the arrival of the man of the

house from the City.

What I have admired in some dear women is their capacity for quarrelling and for reconciliation. As I saw Lady Baker hanging round her son's neck, and fondling his scanty ringlets, I remembered the awful stories with which in former days she used to entertain us regarding this reprobate. Her heart was pincushioned with his filial crimes. Under her chestnut front her ladyship's real head of hair was gray, in consequence of his iniquities. His precocious appetite had devoured the greater

part of her jointure. He had treated her many dangerous illnesses with indifference: had been the worst son, the worst brother, the most ill-conducted schoolboy, the most immoral young man-the terror of households, the Lovelace of garrison towns, the perverter of young officers; in fact, Lady Baker did not know how she supported existence at all under the agony occasioned by his crimes, and it was only from the possession of a more than ordinarily strong sense of religion that she was enabled to bear her burden.

The Captain himself explained these alternating maternal

caresses and quarrels in his easy way.

"Saw how the old lady kissed and fondled me?" says he to his brother-in-law. "Quite refreshin', ain't it? Hang me, I thought she was goin' to send me a bit of sweetbread off her own plate. Came up to my room last night, wanted to tuck me up in bed, and abused my brother to me for an hour. You see, when I'm in favor, she always abuses Baker; when he's in favor she abuses me to him. And my sister-in-law, didn't she give it my sister-in-law! Oh! I'll trouble you! And poor Ceciliawhy, hang me, Mr. Batchelor, she used to go on-this bottle's corked, I'm hanged if it isn't-to go on about Cecilia, and call her \* \* \* Hullo!"

Here he was interrupted by our host, who said sternly-

"Will you please to forget those quarrels, or not mention

them here? Will you have more wine, Batchelor?"

And Lovel rises, and haughtily stalks out of the room. To do Lovel justice, he had a great contempt and dislike for his young brother-in-law, which, with his best magnanimity, he could not at all times conceal.

So our host stalks towards the drawing-room, leaving Cap-

tain Clarence sipping wine.
"Don't go, too," says the Captain. "He's a confounded rum fellow, my brother-in-law is. He's a confounded ill-conditioned fellow, too. They always are, you know, these tradesmen fellows, these half-bred 'uns. I used to tell my sister so; but she would have him, because he had such lots of money, you know. And she threw over a fellar she was very fond of; and I told her she'd regret it. I told Lady B. she'd regret it. It was all Lady B.'s doing She made Cissy throw the fellar over. He was a bad match, certainly, Tom Mountain was; and not a clever fellow, you know, or that sort of thing; but, at any rate, he was a gentleman, and better than a confounded sugar-baking beggar out Ratcliff Highway."

"You seem to find that clare Ly good." I remark. speak

ing, I may say, Socratically, to my young friend, who had been swallowing bumper after bumper.

"Claret good! Yes, doosid good!"

"Well, you see our confounded sugar-baker gives you his best."

"And why shouldn't he, hang him? Why, the fellow chokes with money. What does it matter to him how much he spends? You're a poor man, I dare say. You don't look as if you were overflush of money. Well, if you stood a good dinner, it would be all right—I mean it would show—you understand me, you know. But a sugar-baker with ten thousand a year, what does it matter to him, bottle of claret more—less?"

"Let us go in to the ladies," I say.

"Go in to mother! I don't want to go in to my mother," cries out the artless youth. "And I don't want to go in to the sugar-baker, hang him! and I don't want to go in to the children; and I'd rather have a glass of brandy-and-water with you, old boy. Here you! What's your name? Bedford! I owe you five-and-twenty shillings, do I, old Bedford? Give us a glass of Schnaps, and I'll pay you! Look here, Batchelor. I hate that sugar-baker. Two years ago, I drew a bill on him, and he wouldn't pay it—perhaps he would have paid it, but my sister wouldn't let him. And, I say, shall we go and have a cigar in your room? My mother's been abusing you to me like fun this morning. She abuses everybody. She used to abuse Cissy. Cissy used to abuse her—used to fight like two cats \* \* \* \* \* "

And if I narrate this conversation, dear Spartan youth! if I show thee this Helot maundering in his cups, it is that from his odious example thou may'st learn to be moderate in the use of thine own. Has the enemy who has entered thy mouth ever stolen away thy brains? Has wine ever caused thee to blab secrets; to utter egotisms and follies? Beware of it. Has it ever been thy friend at the end of the hard day's work, the cheery companion of thy companions, the promoter of harmony, kindness, harmless social pleasure? Be thankful for it. Three years since, when the comet was blazing in the autumnal sky, I stood on the château-steps of a great claret proprietor. "Boirai-je de ton vin, O comète?" I said, addressing the luminary with the flaming tail. "Shall those generous bunches which you ripen yield their juices for me morituro?" It was a solemn thought. Ah! my dear brethren! who knows the Order of the Fates? When shall we pass the Gloomy Gates? Which was goes, which of us waits to drink those famous Fifty-eights?

A sermon, upon my word! And pray why not a little homily on an autumn eve over a purple cluster? \* \* \* \* If that rickety boy had only drunk claret, I warrant you his tongue would not have blabbed, his hand would not have shaken, his wretched little brain and body would not have reeled with fever.

"'Gad," said he next day to me, "cut again last night. Have an idea that I abused Lovel. When I have a little wine on board, always speak my mind, don't you know? Last time I was here in my poor sister's time, said somethin' to her, don't quite know what it was, somethin' confoundedly true and unpleasant I dare say. I think it was about a fellow she used to go on with before she married the sugar-baker. And I got orders to quit, by Jove, sir—neck and crop, sir, and no mistake! And we gave it one another over the stairs. Oh, my! we did pitch in !- And that was the last time I ever saw Cecilia-give you my word. A doosid unforgiving woman my poor sister was, and between you and me, Batchelor, as great a flirt as ever threw a fellar over. You should have heard her and my Lady . B. go on, that's all !-Well, mamma, are you going out for a drive in the coachy-poachy?—Not as I knows on, thank you, as I before had the honor to observe. Mr. Batchelor and me are going to play a little game at billiards." We did, and I won; and, from that day to this, have never been paid my little winnings.

On the day after the doughty captain's arrival, Miss Prior, in whose face I had remarked a great expression of gloom and care, neither made her appearance at breakfast nor at the children's dinner. "Miss Prior was a little unwell," Lady Baker said, with an air of most perfect satisfaction. "Mr. Drencher will come to see her this afternoon, and prescribe for her, I dare say," adds her ladyship, nodding and winking a roguish eye at me. I was at a loss to understand what was the point of humor which amused Lady B., until she herself explained it.

"My good sir," she said, "I think Miss Prior is not at all averse to being ill." And the nods recommenced.

"As how?" I ask.

"To being ill, or at least to calling in the medical man."

"Attachment between governess and Sawbones I make bold

for to presume?" says the Captain.

"Precisely, Clarence—a very fitting match. I saw the affair, even before Miss Prior owned it—that is to say, she has not denied it. She says she can't afford to marry, that she has children enough at home in her brothers and sisters. She is a

well-principled young woman, and does credit, Mr. Batchelor, to your recommendation, and the education she has received

from her uncle, the Master of St. Boniface."

"Cissy to school; Pop to Eton; and Miss What-d'you-call to grind the pestle in Sawbones' back-shop: I see!" says Captain Clarence. "He seems a low, vulgar blackguard, that Sawbones."

"Of course, my love, what can you expect from that sort of person?" asks mamma, whose own father was a small attorney in a small Irish town.

"I wish I had his confounded good health," cries Clarence, coughing.

"My poor darling!" says mamma.

I said nothing. And so Elizabeth was engaged to that great, broad-shouldered, red-whiskered young surgeon with the huge appetite and the dubious h's! Well, why not? What was it to me? Why shouldn't she marry him? Was he not an honest man, and a fitting match for her? Yes. Very good. Only if I do love a bird or flower to glad me with its dark blue eye, it is the first to fade away. If I have a partiality for a young gazelle it is the first to—psha! What have I to do with this namby-pamby? Can the heart that has truly loved ever forget, and doesn't it as truly love on to the—stuff! I am past the age of such follies. I might have made a woman happy: I think I should. But the fugacious years have lapsed, my Posthumus! My waist is now a good bit wider than my

chest, and it is decreed that I shall be alone!

My tone, then, when next I saw Elizabeth, was sorrowful -not angry. Drencher, the young doctor, came punctually enough, you may be sure, to look after his patient. Little Pinhorn, the children's maid, led the young practitioner smiling towards the schoolroom regions. His creaking highlows sprang swiftly up the stairs. I happened to be in the hall, and surveyed him with a grim pleasure. "Now he is in the schoolroom," I thought. "Now he is taking her hand-it is very white-and feeling her pulse. And so on, and so on. Surely, surely Pinhorn remains in the room?" I am sitting on a halltable as I muse plaintively on these things, and gaze up the stairs by which the Hakeem (great carroty-whiskered cad!) has passed into the sacred precincts of the harem. As I gaze up the stair, another door opens into the hall; a scowling face peeps through that door, and looks up the stair, too. 'Tis Bedford, who has slid out of his pantry, and watches the doctor. And thou, too, my poor Bedford! Oh! the whole world throbs

with vain heart-pangs, and tosses and heaves with longing, unfulfilled desires! All night, and all over the world, bitter tears are dropping as regular as the dew, and cruel memories are haunting the pillow. Close my hot eyes, kind Sleep! Do not visit it, dear delusive images out of the Past! Often your figure shimmers through my dreams, Glorvina. Not as you are now, the stout mother of many children—you always had an alarming likeness to your own mother, Glorvina—but as you were-slim, black-haired, blue-eyed-when your carnation lips warbled the "Vale of Avoca" or the "Angel's Whisper." "What!" I say then, looking up the stair, "am I absolutely growing jealous of you apothecary?-O fool!" And at this juncture, out peers Bedford's face from the pantry, and I see he is jealous too. I tie my shoe as I sit on the table; I don't affect to notice Bedford in the least (who, in fact, pops his own head back again as soon as he sees mine). I take my wideawake from the peg, set it on one side my head, and strut whistling out of the hall-door. I stretch over Putney Heath, and my spirit resumes its tranquillity.

I sometimes keep a little journal of my proceedings, and on referring to its pages, the scene rises before me pretty clearly to which the brief notes allude. On this day I find noted: "Friday, July 14.—B. came down to-day. Seems to require a great deal of attendance from Dr.—Row between downgers after dinner." "B.," I need not remark, is Bessy. "Dr.," of course, you know. "Row between downgers" means a battle royal between Mrs. Bonnington and Lady Baker, such as not unfre-

quently raged under the kindly Lovel's roof.

Lady Baker's gigantic menial Bulkeley condescended to wait at the family dinner at Shrublands, when perforce he had to put himself under Mr. Bedford's orders. Bedford would gladly have dispensed with the London footman, over whose calves, he said, he and his boy were always tumbling; but Lady Baker's dignity would not allow her to part from her own man; and her good-natured son-in-law allowed her, and indeed almost all other persons, to have their own way. I have reason to fear Mr. Bulkeley's morals were loose. Mrs. Bonnington had a special horror of him; his behavior in the village public-houses, where his powder and plush were forever visible—his freedom of conduct and conversation before the good lady's nurse and parlor-maids-provoked her anger and suspicion. More than once, she whispered to me her loathing of this flour-besprinkled monster; and, as much as such a gentle creature could, she showed her dislike to him by her behavior. The flunkey's

solemn equanimity was not to be disturbed by any such feeble indications of displeasure. From his powdered height, he looked down upon Mrs. Bonnington, and her esteem or her dislike was beneath him.

Now on this Friday night the 14th, Captain Clarence had gone to pass the day in town, and our Bessy made her appearance again, the doctor's prescriptions having, I suppose, agreed with her. Mr. Bulkeley, who was handing coffee to the ladies, chose to offer none to Miss Prior, and I was amused when I saw Bedford's heel scrunch down on the flunkey's right foot, as he pointed towards the governess. The oaths which Bulkeley had to devour in silence must have been frightful. To do the gallant fellow justice, I think he would have died rather than speak before company in a drawing-room. He limped up and offered the refreshment to the young lady, who bowed and declined it.

"Frederick," Mrs. Bonnington begins, when the coffee-ceremony is over, "now the servants are gone, I must scold you about the waste at your table, my dear. What was the need of opening that great bottle of champagne? Lady Baker only takes two glasses. Mr. Batchelor doesn't touch it." (No thank you, my dear Mrs. Bonnington: too old a stager.) "Why not have a little bottle instead of that great, large, immense one? Bedford is a teetotaler. I suppose it is that London footman who likes it."

"My dear mother, I haven't really ascertained his tastes," says Lovel.

"Then why not tell Bedford to open a pint, dear?" pur-

sues mamma.

"Oh, Bedford—Bedford, we must not mention him, Mrs. Bonnington!" cries Lady Baker. "Bedford is faultless. Bedford has the keys of everything. Bedford is not to be controlled in anything. Bedford is to be at liberty to be rude to my servant."

"Bedford was admirably kind in his attendance on your daughter, Lady Baker," says Lovel, his brow darkening: "and as for your man, I should think he was big enough to protect himself from any rudeness of poor Dick!" The good fellow had been angry for one moment, at the next he was all for peace and conciliation.

Lady Baker puts on her superfine air. With that air she had often awe-stricken good, simple Mrs. Bonnington; and she loved to use it whenever City folks or humble people were present. You see she thought herself your superior and mine, as

de par la monde there are many artless Lady Bakers who do. "My dear Frederick!" says Lady B., then, putting on her best May Fair manner, "excuse me for saying, but you don't know the—the class of servant to which Bulkeley belongs. I had him as a great favor from Lord Toddleby's. That—that class of servant is not generally accustomed to go out single."

"Unless they are two behind a carriage-perch they pine away, I suppose," remarks Mr. Lovel, "as one love-bird does

without his mate."

"No doubt—no doubt," says Lady B., who does not in the least understand him; "I only say you are not accustomed here—in this kind of establishment, you understand—to that class of——"

But here Mrs. Bonnington could contain her wrath no more. "Lady Baker!" cries that injured mother, is my son's establishment not good enough for any powdered wretch in England? Is the house of a British merchant—"

"My dear creature—my dear creature!" interposes her ladyship, "it is the house of a British merchant, and a most

comfortable house too."

"Yes, as you find it," remarks mamma.

"Yes, as I find it, when I come to take care of that departed angel's children, Mrs. Bonnington!"—(Lady B. here indicates the Cecilian effigy)—" of that dear seraph's orphans, Mrs. Bonnington! You cannot. You have other duties—other children—a husband, whom you have left at home in delicate health, and who—"

"Lady Baker!" exclaimed Mrs. Bonnington, "no one shall

say I don't take care of my dear husband!"

"My dear Lady Baker!—my dear—dear mother!" cries Lovel, éploré, and whimpers aside to me, "They spar in this way every night, when we're alone. It's too bad, ain't it, Batch?"

"I say you do take care of Mr. Bonnington," Baker blandly resumes (she has hit Mrs. Bonnington on the raw place, and smilingly proceeds to thong again): "I say you do take care of your husband, my dear creature, and that is why you can't attend to Frederick! And as he is of a very easy temper,—except sometimes with his poor Cecilia's mother,—he allows all his tradesmen to cheat him; all his servants to cheat him; Bedford to be rude to everybody; and if to me, why not to my servant Bulkeley, with whom Lord Toddleby's groom of the chambers gave me the very highest character?"

Mrs. Bonnington in a great flurry broke in by saying she

was surprised to hear that noblemen had grooms in their chambers; and she thought they were much better in the stables; and when they dined with Captain Huff, you know, Frederick, his man always brought such a dreadful smell of the stable in with him, that—— Here she paused. Baker's eye was on her; and that Dowager was grinning a cruel triumph.

"He!—he! You mistake, my good Mrs. Bonnington!" says her ladyship. "Your poor mother mistakes, my dear Frederick. You have lived in a quiet and most respectable sphere, but not,

you understand, not-"

"Not what, pray, Lady Baker? We have lived in this neighborhood twenty years: in my late husband's time, when we saw a great deal of company, and this dear Frederick was a boy at Westminster School. And we have paid for everything we have had for twenty years; and we have not owed a penny to any tradesman. And we may not have had powdered footmen, six feet high, impertinent beasts, who were rude to all the maids in the place. Don't—I will speak, Frederick! But servants who loved us, and who were paid their wages, and who—o—ho—ho—ho!"

Wipe your eyes, dear friends! out with all your pockethandkerchiefs. I protest I cannot bear to see a woman in distress. Of course Fred Lovel runs to console his dear old mother, and vows Lady Baker meant no harm.

"Meant harm! My dear Frederick, what harm can I mean? I only said your poor mother did not seem to know what a

groom of the chambers was! How should she?"

"Come-come," says Frederick, "enough of this! Miss

Prior, will you be so kind as to give us a little music?"

Miss Prior was playing Beethoven at the piano, very solemnly and finely, when our Black Sheep returned to this quiet fold, and, I am sorry to say, in a very riotous condition. The brilliancy of his eye, the purple flush on his nose, the unsteady gait, and uncertain tone of voice, told tales of Captain Clarence, who stumbled over more than one chair before he found a seat near me.

"Quite right, old boy," says he, winking at me. "Cut again—dooshid good fellosh. Better than being along with you shtoo-pid-old-fogish." And he began to warble wild "Fol-de-rol-lolls" in an insane accompaniment to the music.

"By heavens, this is too bad!" growls Lovel. "Lady Baker, let your big man carry your son to bed. Thank you, Miss

Prior!"

At a final yell, which the unbecky young scapegrace gave,

Elizabeth stopped, and rose from the piano, looking very pale. She made her curtsey, and was departing, when the wretched young captain sprung up, looked at her, and sank back on the sofa with another wild laugh. Bessy fled away scared, and white as a sheet.

"Take the brute to bed!" roars the master of the house, in great wrath. And scapegrace was conducted to his apartment, whither he went laughing wildly, and calling out, "Come on, old sh-sh-shugar-baker!"

The morning after this fine exhibition, Captain Clarence Baker's mamma announced to us that her poor dear suffering boy was too ill to come to breakfast, and I believe he prescribed for himself devilled drumstick and soda-water, of which he partook in his bedroom. Lovel, seldom angry, was violently wroth with his brother-in-law; and, almost always polite, was at breakfast scarcely civil to Lady Baker. I am bound to say that female abused her position. She appeals to Cecilia's picture a great deal too much during the course of breakfast. She hinted, she sighed, she waggled her head at me, and spoke about "that angel" in the most tragic manner. Angel is all very well: but your angel brought in à tout propos; your departed blessing called out of her grave ever so many times a day; when grandmamma wants to carry a point of her own; when the children are naughty, or noisy; when papa betrays a bickering inclination to dine at his club, or to bring home a bachelor friend or two to Shrublands ;- I say your angel always dragged in by the wings into the conversation loses her effect. No man's heart put on wider crape than Lovel's at Cecilia's loss. Considering the circumstances, his grief was most creditable to him: but at breakfast, at lunch, about Bulkeley the footman, about the barouche or the phaeton, or any trumpery domestic perplexity, to have a *Deus intersit* was too much. And I observed, with some inward satisfaction, that when Baker uttered her pompous funeral phrases, rolled her eyes up to the ceiling, and appealed to that quarter, the children ate their jam and quarrelled and kicked their little shins under the table, Lovel read his paper and looked at his watch to see if it was omnibus time; and Bessy made the tea, quite undisturbed by the old lady's tragical prattle.

When Baker described her son's fearful cough and dreadfully feverish state, I said, "Surely, Lady Baker, Mr. Drencher had better be sent for;" and I suppose I uttered the disgusting dissyllable Drencher with a fine sarcastic accent; for once, 'ust once Bessy's gray eyes rose through the spectacles and

met mine with a glance of unutterable sadness, then calmly settled down on to the slop-basin again, or the urn, in which her pale features, of course, were odiously distorted.

"You will not bring anybody home to dinner, Frederick, in

my poor boy's state?" asks Lady B.

"He may stay in his bedroom I suppose," replies Lovel.

"He is Cecilia's brother, Frederick!" cries the lady.

"Conf—" Lovel was beginning. What was he about to say?

"If you are going to confound your angel in heaven, I have

nothing to say, sir!" cries the mother of Clarence.

"Parbleu, madame!" cried Lovel, in French; "if he were not my wife's brother, do you think I would let him stay here?"

"Parly Français? Oui, oui!" cries Pop. "I know what Pa means!"

"And so do I know. And I shall lend uncle Clarence some books which Mr. Bonnington gave me, and—"

"Hold your tongue all!" shouts Lovel, with a stamp of his

foot.

"You will, perhaps, have the great kindness to allow me the use of your carriage—or, at least, to wait here until my poor suffering boy can be moved, Mr. Lovel?" says Lady B., with the airs of a martyr.

Lovel rang the bell. "The carriage for Lady Baker—at her ladyship's hour, Bedford: and the cart for her luggage. Her

ladyship and Captain Baker are going away."

"I have lost one child, Mr. Lovel, whom some people seem to forget. I am not going to murder another! I will not leave this house, sir, unless you drive me from it by force, until the medical man has seen my boy!" And here she and sorrow sat down again. She was always giving warning. She was always fitting the halter and traversing the cart, was Lady B., but she forever declined to drop the handkerchief and have the business over. I saw by a little shrug in Bessy's shoulders, what the governess's views were of the matter: and, in a word, Lady B. no more went away on this day, than she had done on forty previous days when she announced her intention of going. She would accept benefits, you see, but then she insulted her benefactors, and so squared accounts.

That great healthy, florid, scarlet-whiskered medical wretch came at about twelve, saw Mr. Baker and prescribed for him: and of course he must have a few words with Miss Prior, and inquire it the state of her health. Just as on the previous occasion, I

happened to be in the hall when Drencher went up stairs; Bedford happened to be looking out of his pantry door: I burst into a yell of laughter when I saw Dick's livid face—the sight

somehow suited my savage soul.

No sooner was Medicus gone than Bessy, grave and pale, in bonnet and spectacles, came sliding down stairs. I do not mean down the banister, which was Pop's favorite method of descent; but slim, tall, noiseless, in a nunlike calm, she swept down the steps. Of course, I followed her. And there was Master Bedford's nose peeping through the pantry door at us, as we went out with the children. Pray, what business of his was it to be always watching anybody who walked with Miss Prior?

"So, Bessy," I said, "what report does Mr.—hem!—Mr.

Drencher—give of the interesting invalid?"

"Oh, the most horrid! He says that Captain Baker has several times had a dreadful disease brought on by drinking, and that he is mad when he has delusions, sees demons, when he is in this state—wants to be watched."

"Drencher tells you everything?"

She says meekly: "He attends us when we are ill."

I remark, with fine irony: "He attends the whole family: he is always coming to Shrublands!"

"He comes very often," Miss Prior says gravely.

"And do you mean to say, Bessy," I cry, madly cutting off two or three heads of yellow broom with my stick—"do you mean to say a fellow like that, who drops his h's about the room, is a welcome visitor?"

"I should be very ungrateful if he were not welcome, Mr. Batchelor," says Miss Prior. "And call me by my surname, please—and he has taken care of all my family—and——"

"And, of course, of course, of course, Miss Prior!" say I, brutally; "and this is the way the world wags; and this is the way we are ill, and are cured; and we are grateful to the doctor that cures us!"

She nods her grave head. "You used to be kinder to me once, Mr. Batchelor, in old days—in your—in my time of trouble! Yes, my dear, that is a beautiful bit of broom! Oh, what a fine butterfly!" (Cecilia scours the plain after the butterfly.) "You used to be kinder to me once—when we were both unhappy."

"I was unhappy," I say, "but I survived. I was ill, but I am now pretty well, thank you. I was jilted by a false, heartless woman. Do you suppose there are no other heartless

women in the world?" And I am confident, if Bessy's breast had not been steel, the daggers which darted out from my eyes

would have bored frightful stabs in it.

But she shook her head, and looked at me so sadly that my eye-daggers tumbled down to the ground at once; for you see, though I am a jealous Turk, I am a very easily appeased jealous Turk; and if I had been Bluebeard, and my wife, just as I was going to decapitate her, had lifted up her head from the block and cried a little, I should have dropped my scimitar, and said, "Come, come, Fatima, never mind for the present about that key and closet business, and I'll chop your head off some other morning." I say Bessy disarmed me. Pooh! I say, women will make a fool of me to the end. Ah! ye gracious Fates! Cut my thread of life ere it grow too long. Suppose I were to live till seventy, and some little wretch of a woman were to set her cap at me? She would catch me—I know she would. All the males of our family have been spoony and soft, to a degree perfectly ludicrous and despicable to contemplate— Well, Bessy Prior, putting a hand out, looked at me, and said—

"You are the oldest and best friend I have ever had, Mr.

Batchelor—the only friend."

"Am I, Elizabeth?" I gasp, with a beating heart.

"Cissy is running back with a butterfly." (Our hands unlock.) "Don't you see the difficulties of my position? Don't you know that ladies are often jealous of governesses; and that unless—unless they imagined I was—I was favorable to Mr. Drencher, who is very good and kind—the ladies of Shrublands might not like my remaining alone in the house with—with—you understand?" A moment the eyes look over the spectacles: at the next, the meek bonnet bows down towards the ground.

I wonder did she hear the bump—bumping of my heart! O heart!—O wounded heart! did I ever think thou would'st bump—bump again? "Egl—Egl—izabeth," I say, choking with emotion, "do, do, do you—te—tell me—you don't—don't

—don't—lo—love that apothecary?"

She shrugs her shoulder—her charming shoulder.

"And if," I hotly continue, "if a gentleman—if a man of mature age certainly, but who has a kind heart and four hundred a year of his own—were to say to you, 'Elizabeth! will you bid the flowers of a blighted life to bloom again?—Elizabeth! will you soothe a wounded heart?'——"

"Oh, Mr. Batchelor!" she sighed, and then added quickly,

"Please, don't take my hand. Here's Pop."



BESSY'S REFLECTIONS.

un in her bear charming way, says. "You shan't take his Begaverer planting id do bk a chief of bost fit was het dinner. tale sometime and the fall of the life of the land of A REAL PRODUCTIONS OF SITE OF MAINTINGS OF THE PROPERTY AND THE PROPERTY A 

And that dear child (bless him!) came up at the moment, saying, "Oh, Miss Prior, look here! I've got such a jolly big toadstool!" And next came Cissy, with a confounded butterfly. O Richard the Third! Haven't you been maligned because you smothered two little nuisances in a Tower? What is to prove to me that you did not serve the little brutes right, and that you weren't a most humane man? Darling Cissy coming up, in her dear, charming way, says, "You sha'n't take Mr. Batchelor's hand, you shall take my hand!" And she tosses up her little head, and walks with the instructress of her youth.

"Ces enfans ne comprennent guère le Français," says Miss

Prior, speaking very rapidly.

"Après lonche?" I whisper. The fact is, I was so agitated I hardly knew what the French for lunch was. And then our conversation dropped: and the beating of my own heart was all the sound I heard.

Lunch came. I couldn't eat a bit: I should have choked, Bessy ate plenty, and drank a glass of beer. It was her dinner, to be sure. Young Blacksheep did not appear. We did not miss him. When Lady Baker began to tell her story of George IV. at Slane Castle, I went into my own room. I took a book. Books? Psha! I went into the garden. I took out a cigar. But no, I would not smoke it. Perhaps she—many

people don't like smoking.

I went into the garden. "Come into the garden, Maud." I sat by a large lilac-bush. I waited. Perhaps she would come? The morning-room windows were wide open on the lawn. Will she never come? Ah! what is that tall form advancing? gliding—gliding into the chamber like a beauteous ghost? "Who most does like an angel show, you may be sure 'tis she." She comes up to the glass. She lays her spectacles down on the mantel-piece. She puts a slim white hand over her auburn hair and looks into the mirror. Elizabeth, Elizabeth! I come!

As I came up, I saw a horrid little grinning, debauched face surge over the back of a great arm-chair and look towards Elizabeth. It was Captain Blacksheep, of course. He laid his elbows over the chair. He looked keenly and with a diabolical smile at the unconscious girl; and just as I reached the window,

he cried out, "Bessy Bellenden, by Fove!"

Elizabeth turned round, gave a little cry, and——but what happened I shall tell in the ensuing chapter

there-might have been a Mrs. Blitchelof. It might have been

## CHAPTER V.

## IN WHICH I AM STUNG BY A SERPENT.

IF when I heard Baker call out Bessy Bellenden, and adjure Jove, he had run forward and seized Elizabeth by the waist, or offered her other personal indignity, I too should have run forward on my side and engaged him. Though I am a stout elderly man, short in stature and in wind, I know I am a match for that rickety little captain on his high-heeled boots. A match for him? I believe Miss Bessy would have been a match for both of us. Her white arm was as hard and polished as ivory. Had she held it straight pointed against the rush of the dragoon, he would have fallen backwards before his intended prey: I have no doubt he would. It was the hen, in this case, was stronger than the libertine fox, and au besoin would have pecked the little marauding vermin's eyes out. Had, I say, Partlet been weak, and Reynard strong, I would have come forward; I certainly would. Had he been a wolf now, instead of a fox, I am certain I should have run in upon him, grappled with him, torn his heart and tongue out of his black throat, and trampled the lawless brute to death.

Well, I didn't do any such thing. I was just going to run in,—and I didn't. I was just going to rush to Bessy's side to clasp her (I have no doubt) to my heart: to beard the whiskered champion who was before her, and perhaps say, "Cheer theecheer thee, my persecuted maiden, my beauteous love—my Rebecca! Come on, Sir Brian de Bois Guilbert, thou dastard Templar! It is I, Sir Wilfrid of Ivanhoe." (By the way, though the fellow was not a Templar, he was a Lincoln's-Inn man, having passed twice through the Insolvent Court there with infinite discredit.) But I made no heroic speeches. There was no need for Rebecca to jump out of window and risk her lovely neck. How could she, in fact, the French window being flush with the ground floor? And I give you my honor, just as I was crying my war-cry, couching my lance, and rushing à la recousse upon Sir Baker, a sudden thought made me drop my (figurative) point: a sudden i ea made me rein in my galloping (metaphorical) steed and spare Baker for that time.

Suppose I had gone in? But for that sudden precaution,

there might have been a Mrs. Batchelor. I might have been a bullied father of ten children. (Elizabeth has a fine high temper of her own.) What is four hundred and twenty a year, with a wife and perhaps half a dozen children? Should I have been a whit the happier? Would Elizabeth? Ah! no. And yet I feel a certain sort of shame, even now, when I think that I didn't go in. Not that I was in a fright, as some people choose to hint. I swear I was not. But the reason why I did not charge was this-

Nay, I did charge part of the way, and then, I own, stopped. It was an error in judgment. It wasn't a want of courage. Lord George Sackville was a brave man, and as cool as a cucumber under fire. Well, he didn't charge at the battle of Minden, and Prince Ferdinand made the deuce and all of a disturbance, as we know. Byng was a brave man, -and I ask, wasn't it a confounded shame executing him? So with respect to myself. Here is my statement. I make it openly. I don't care. I am accused of seeing a woman insulted, and not going to her rescue. I am not guilty, I say. That is, there were reasons which caused me not to attack. Even putting aside the superior strength of Elizabeth herself to the enemy,-I vow there were cogent and honorable reasons why I did not charge home.

You see I happened to be behind a blue lilac-bush (and was turning a rhyme—heaven help us !—in which death was only to part me and Elizabeth) when I saw Baker's face surge over the chair-back. I rush forward as he cries "by Jove." Had Miss Prior cried out on her part, the strength of twenty Heenans, I know, would have nerved this arm; but all she did was to turn pale, and say, "O mercy! Captain Baker! Do pity me!"

"What! you remember me, Bessy Bellenden, do you?"

asks the Captain, advancing.

"Oh, not that name! please, not that name!" cries Bessy.

"I thought I knew you yesterday," says Baker. "Only, gad, you see, I had so much claret on board, I did not much know what was what. And oh! Bessy, I have got such a splitter of a headache."

"Oh! please—please, my name is Miss Prior.

sir, don't-"

"You've got handsomer-doosid deal handsomer. Know you now well, your spectacles off. You come in here—teach my nephew and niece, humbug my sister, make love to the sh—— Oh! you uncommon sly little toad!"

"Captain Baker! I beg—I implore you," says Bessy, or

something of the sort: for the white hands assumed an attitude of supplication.

"Pooh! don't gammon me!" says the rickety Captain (or words to that effect), and seizes those two firm white hands in

his moist, trembling palms.

Now do you understand why I paused? When the dandy came grinning forward, with looks and gestures of familiar recognition: when the pale Elizabeth implored him to spare her:—a keen arrow of jealousy shot whizzing through my heart, and caused me wellnigh to fall backwards as I ran forwards. I bumped up against a bronze group in the garden. The group represented a lion stung by a serpent. I was a lion stung by a serpent too. Even Baker could have knocked me down. Fiends and anguish! he had known her before. The Academy, the life she had led, the wretched old tipsy ineffective guardian of a father—all these antecedents in poor Bessy's history passed through my mind. And I had offered my heart and troth to this woman! Now, my dear sir, I appeal to you. What would you have done? Would you have liked to have such a sudden suspicion thrown over the being of your affection? "Oh! spare me-spare me!" I heard her say, in clear-too clearpathetic tones. And then there came rather a shrill "Ah!" and then the lion was up in my breast again; and I give you my honor, just as I was going to step forward—to step?—to rush forward from behind the urn where I had stood for a moment with thumping heart, Bessy's "Ah!" or little cry was followed by a whack, which I heard as clear as anything I ever heard in my life;—and I saw the little Captain spin back, topple over a chair heels up, and in this posture heard him begin to scream and curse in shrill tones.

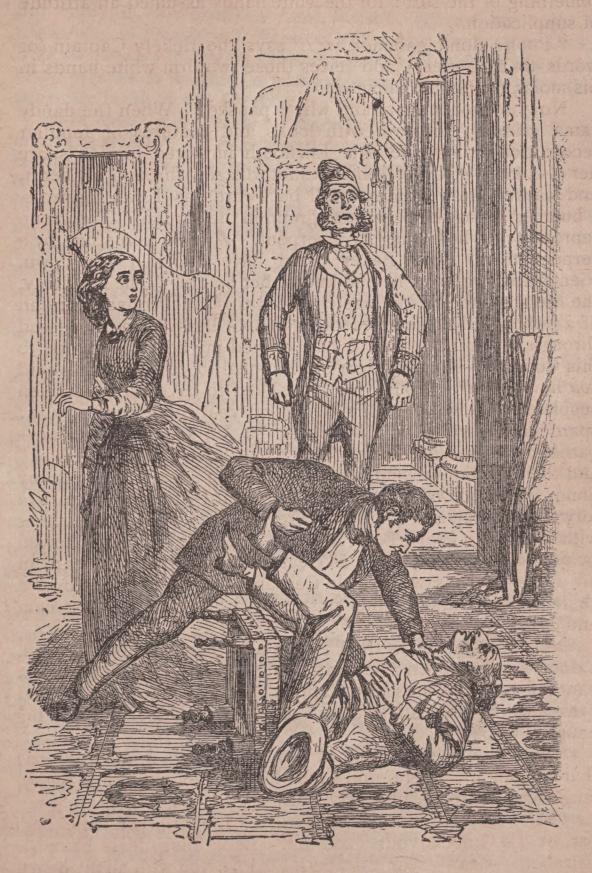
Not for long, for as the Captain and the chair tumble down, a door springs open ;—a man rushes in, who pounces like a panther upon the prostrate Captain, pitches into his nose and eyes, and chokes his bad language by sending a fist down his naughty throat.

"Oh! thank you, Bedford!—please, leave him, Bedford! that's enough. There, don't hurt him any more!" says Bessy,

laughing—laughing, upon my word.

"Ah! will you?" says Bedford. "Lie still, you little beggar, or I'll knock your head off. Look here, Miss Prior!-Elizabeth—dear—dear Elizabeth! I love you with all my heart, and soul, and strength-I do."

"O Bedford! Bedford!" warbles Elizabeth.
"I do! I can't help it. I must say it! Ever since Rome, I



BEDFORD TO THE RESCUE.

do. Lie still, you drunken little beast! It's no use. But I adore you, O Elizabeth! Elizabeth! And there was Dick, who was always following Mrss P. about, and poking his head into keyholes to spy her, acqually making love to ber over the prostrate body of the Captain.

Now, what was I to do? Wasn't I in a most confoundedly awliwer! situation? A lady had been attacked—a lady 1—1/10 lady, and I hadn't rescued her. Her insolent enemy was overther myself, had come in, and do it is blow. I was in such a lage of mornification, that I should have liked to the as in such a lage of mornification, that I should have liked to the as the makelsed there second was a tough little hare. And it was he who rescued the damsel, whilst I speed by! In a strait so what side, and humilianas, what should I, what could I, what could I, what do it, what do it was he od our strait and humilianas, what should I, what could I,

palestrade, built for no particular reason, but flanking three rapps and agricular reason, but flanking three rapps and agricular reason, but flanking three rapps and agricular for the industrial than rises up on a level to the flows windows. Revolution the industrial is a shrubbery of more rises and so forth, by which you can walk round into another path, which also leads up to the bouse. So as I shad not read round that shrubbery three the other path, and so entered not not a couse, and that shrubbery three the other path, and so entered the gouse, arriving like Fortighras in "Hamler," when every not round and sprawling you know, and the whole business

And was there to be no end to my shame, or to Redford's lawels? In that brief smeares, whilst I was waking toyng the fynath (pray to give masself a prevent for entering oppliyance the premises), this fortunate fellowinad absolutely engaged another act lawer committee. This was no other than Bulkeley, my lady a first-class amondant. When the Captain feel arreast his action to the Captain feel arreast arreast his action to the Captain teel arreast his action to the first shakeley; and then in the strongs and curses, he called for Bulkeley; and then in the strongs and curses, he called for Bulkeley; and then in the strongs and courses, he called for Bulkeley; and then in the

"Lighted: whot's and row year? " says Goliath, cutering,

"Treet what a the fire weart" alte the granadich. " Off with your reading the cost (Reddord

were compressed and Dicheron that to him we on bone of the

do. Lie still, you drunken little beast! It's no use. But I adore you, O Elizabeth! Elizabeth!" And there was Dick, who was always following Miss P. about, and poking his head into keyholes to spy her, actually making love to her over the

prostrate body of the Captain.

Now, what was I to do? Wasn't I in a most confoundedly awkward situation? A lady had been attacked—a lady!—the lady, and I hadn't rescued her. Her insolent enemy was overthrown, and I hadn't done it. A champion, three inches shorter than myself, had come in, and dealt the blow. I was in such a rage of mortification, that I should have liked to thrash the Captain and Bedford too. The first I know I could have matched: the second was a tough little hero. And it was he who rescued the damsel, whilst I stood by! In a strait so odious, sudden, and humiliating, what should I, what could I, what did I do?

Behind the lion and snake there is a brick wall and marble balustrade, built for no particular reason, but flanking three steps and a grassy terrace, which then rises up on a level to the house-windows. Beyond the balustrade is a shrubbery of more lilacs and so forth, by which you can walk round into another path, which also leads up to the house. So as I had not charged—ah! woe is me!—as the battle was over, I—I just went round that shrubbery into the other path, and so entered the house, arriving like Fortinbras in "Hamlet," when everybody is dead and sprawling, you know, and the whole business is done.

And was there to be no end to my shame, or to Bedford's laurels? In that brief interval, whilst I was walking round the bypath (just to give myself a pretext for entering coolly into the premises), this fortunate fellow had absolutely engaged another and larger champion. This was no other than Bulkeley, my Lady B.'s first-class attendant. When the Captain fell, amidst his screams and curses, he called for Bulkeley: and that individual made his appearance, with a little Scotch cap perched on his powdered head.

"Hullo! what's the row year?" says Goliath, entering.

"Kill that blackguard! Hang him, kill him!" screams Captain Blacksheep, rising with bleeding nose.

"I say, what's the row year?" asks the grenadier.

"Off with your cap, sir, before a lady!" calls out Bedford.

"Hoff with my cap! you be blo-"

But he said no more, for little Bedford jumped some two feet from the ground, and knocked the cap off, so that a cloud

of ambrosial powder filled the room with violet odors. The immense frame of the giant shook at this insult: "I will be the death on you, you little beggar!" he grunted out; and was advancing to destroy Dick, just as I entered in the cloud which his head had raised.

"I'll knock the brains as well as the powder out of your ugly head!" says Bedford, springing at the poker. At which

juncture I entered.

"What—what is this disturbance?" I say, advancing with an air of mingled surprise and resolution.

"You git out of the way till I knock his 'ead off!" roars

Bulkeley.

"Take up your hat, sir, and leave the room," I say, still with the same elegant firmness.

"Put down that there poker, you coward!" bellows the

monster on board wages.

"Miss Prior!" I say (like a dignified hypocrite, as I own I was), "I hope no one has offered you a rudeness?" And I glare round, first at the knight of the bleeding nose, and then at his squire.

Miss Prior's face, as she replied to me, wore a look of awful

scorn.

"Thank you, sir," she said, turning her head over her shoulder, and looking at me with her gray eyes. "Thank you, Richard Bedford! God bless you! I shall ever be thankful to you, wherever I am." And the stately figure swept out of the room.

She had seen me behind that confounded statue, then, and I had not come to her! O torments and racks! O scorpions, fiends and pitchforks! The face of Bedford, too (flashing with knightly gratitude anon as she spoke kind words to him and passed on), wore a look of scorn as he turned towards me, and then stood, his nostrils distended, and breathing somewhat hard, glaring at his enemies, and still grasping his mace of battle.

When Elizabeth was gone, there was a pause of a moment, and then Blacksheep, taking his bleeding cambric from his nose, shrieks out, "Kill him, I say! A fellow that dares to hit one in my condition, and when I'm down! Bulkeley, you great hulking jackass! kill him, I say!"

"Jest let him put that there poker down, that's hall," growls

Bulkeley.

"You're afraid, you great cowardly beast! You shall go, Mr. What-d'ye-call-'im—Mr. Bedford—you shall have the sack,

sir, as sure as your name is what it is! I'll tell my brother-inlaw everything; and as for that woman—"

"If you say a word against her, I'll cane you wherever I see

you, Captain Baker!" I cry out.

"Who spoke to you?" says the Captain, falling back and

scowling at me.

"Who hever told you to put your foot in?" says the squire. I was in such a rage, and so eager to find an object on which I might wreak my fury, that I confess I plunged at this Bulkeley. I gave him two most violent blows on the waistcoat, which caused him to double up with such frightful contortions, that Bedford burst out laughing; and even the Captain with the damaged eye and nose began to laugh too. Then, taking a lesson from Dick, as there was a fine shining dagger on the table, used for the cutting open of reviews and magazines, I seized and brandished this weapon, and I dare say would have sheathed it in the giant's bloated corpus, had he made any movement towards me. But he only called out, "hI'll be the death on you, you cowards! hI'll be the death of both on you!" and snatching up his cap from the carpet, walked out of the room.

"Glad you did that, though," says Baker, nodding his head.

"Think I'd best pack up."

And now the Devil of Rage which had been swelling within me gave place to a worse devil—the Devil of Jealousy—and I turned on the Captain, who was also just about to slink away:—

"Stop!" I cried out—I screamed out, I may say.

"Who spoke to you, I should like to know? and who the dooce dares to speak to me in that sort of way?" says Clarence Baker, with a plentiful garnish of expletives, which need not be here inserted. But he stopped, nevertheless, and turned slouching round.

"You spoke just now of Miss Prior?" I said. "Have you

anything against her?"

"What's that to you?" he asked.

"I am her oldest friend. I introduced her into this family.

Dare you say a word against her?"

"Well, who the dooce has?"

"You knew her before?"

"Yes, I did, then."

"When she went by the name of Bellenden?"

"Of course I did. And what's that to you?" he screams out.

"I this day asked her to be my wife, sir! That's what it is to me!" I replied, with severe dignity.

Mr. Clarence began to whistle. "Oh! if that's it - of

course not!" he says.

The jealous demon writhed within me and rent me.

"You mean that there is something, then?" I asked, glar-

ing at the young reprobate.

"No, I don't," says he, looking very much frightened. "No, there is nothin'. Upon my sacred honor, there isn't, that I know." (I was looking uncommonly fierce at this time, and, I must own, would rather have guarrelled with somebody than not.) "No, there is nothin' that I know. Ever so many years ago, you see, I used to go with Tom Papillion, Turkington, and two or three fellows, to that theatre. Dolphin had it. And we used to go behind the scenes-and-and I own I had a row with her. And I was in the wrong. There now, I own I was. And she left the theatre. And she behaved quite right. And I was very sorry. And I believe she is as good a woman as ever stept now. And the father was a disreputable old man, but most honorable—I know he was. And there was a fellow in the Bombay service—a fellow by the name of Walker or Walkingham-yes, Walkingham; and I used to meet him at the 'Cave of Harmony,' you know; and he told me that she was as right as right could be. And he was doosidly cut up about leaving her. And he would have married her, I dessay, only for his father the General, who wouldn't stand it. And he was ready to hang himself when he went away. He used to drink awfully, and then he used to swear about her; and we used to chaff him, you know. Low, vulgarish sort of man, he was; and a very passionate fellow. And if you're goin' to marry her, you know-of course, I ask your pardon, and that; and upon the honor of a gentleman I know nothin' against her. And I wish you joy and all that sort of thing. I do now, really now!" And so saying, the mean, mischievous little monkey sneaked away, and clambered up to his own perch in his own bedroom.

Worthy Mrs. Bonnington, with a couple of her young ones, made her appearance at this juncture. She had a key, which gave her a free pass though the garden door, and brought her children for an afternoon's play and fighting with their little nephew and niece. Decidedly, Bessy did not bring up her young folks well. Was it that their grandmothers spoiled them, and undid the governess's work? Were those young people odious (as they often were) by nature, or rendered so by the neglect of their guardians? If Bessy had loved her charges more,

would they not have been better? Had she a kind, loving, maternal heart? Ha! This thought—this jealous doubt smote my bosom: and were she mine, and the mother of many possible little Batchelors, would she be kind to them? Would they be wilful, and selfish, and abominable little wretches, in a word, like these children? Nay-nay! Say that Elizabeth has but a cold heart; we cannot be all perfection. But, per contra, you must admit that, cold as she is, she does her duty. How good she has been to her own brothers and sisters: how cheerfully she has given away her savings to them: how admirably she has behaved to her mother, hiding the iniquities of that disreputable old schemer, and covering her improprieties with decent filial screens and pretexts. Her mother? Ah! grands dieux! You want to marry, Charles Batchelor, and you will have that greedy pauper for a mother-in-law; that fluffy Bluecoat boy, those hobnailed taw-players, top-spinners, toffee-eaters, those underbred girls, for your brothers and sisters-in-law! They will be quartered upon you. You are so absurdly weak and good-natured-you know you are-that you will never be able to resist. Those boys will grow up: they will go out as clerks or shopboys: get into debt, and expect you to pay their bills: want to be articled to attorneys and so forth, and call upon you for the premium. Their mother will never be out of your house. She will ferret about in your drawers and wardrobes, filch your haberdashery, and cast greedy eyes on the very shirts and coats on your back, and calculate when she can get them for her boys. Those vulgar young miscreants will never fail to come and dine with you on a Sunday. They will bring their young linendraper or articled friends. They will draw bills on you, or give their own to money-lenders, and unless you take up those bills they will consider you a callous, avaricious brute, and the heartless author of their ruin. The girls will come and practise on your wife's piano. They won't come to you on Sundays only; they will always be staying in the house. They will always be preventing a tête-à-tête between your wife and you. As they grow old, they will want her to take them out to tea-parties, and to give such entertainments, where they will introduce their odious young men. They will expect you to commit meannesses, in order to get theatre tickets for them from the newspaper editors of your acquaintance. You will have to sit in the back seat: to pay the cab to and from the play: to see glances and bows of recognition passing between them and dubious bucks in the lobbies: and to lend the girls your wife's gloves, scarfs, ornaments, smellingbottles, and handkerchiefs, which of course they will never return. If Elizabeth is ailing from any circumstance, they will get a footing in your house, and she will be jealous of them. The ladies of your own family will quarrel with them of course; and very likely your mother-in-law will tell them a piece of her mind. And you bring this dreary certainty upon you, because, forsooth, you fall in love with a fine figure, a pair of gray eyes, and a head of auburn (not to say red) hair! O Charles Batchelor! in what a galley hast thou seated thyself, and what a family

is crowded in thy boat!

All these thoughts are passing in my mind, as good Mrs. Bonnington is prattling to me—I protest I don't know about what. I think I caught some faint sentences about the Patagonian mission, the National schools, and Mr. Bonnington's lumbago; but I can't say for certain. I was busy with my own thoughts. I had asked the awful question-I was not answered. Bessy had even gone away in a huff about my want of gallantry, but I was easy on that score. As for Mr. Drencher, she had told me her sentiments regarding him; "and though I am considerably older, yet," thought I, "I need not be afraid of that rival. But when she says yes? Oh, dear! oh, dear! Yes means Elizabeth—certainly, a brave young woman—but it means Mrs. Prior, and Gus, and Amelia Jane, and the whole of that dismal family." No wonder, with these dark thoughts crowding my mind, Mrs. Bonnington found me absent; and, as a comment upon some absurd reply of mine, said, "La! Mr. Batchelor, you must be crossed in love!" Crossed in love! It might be as well for some folks if they were crossed in love. At my age, and having loved madly, as I did, that party in Dublin, a man doesn't take the second fit by any means so strongly. Well! well! the die was cast, and I was there to bide the hazard. What can be the matter? I look pale and unwell, and had better see Mr. D.? Thank you, my dear Mrs. Bonnington. I had a violent—a violent toothache last night yes, toothache; and was kept awake, thank you. And there's nothing like having it out? and Mr. D. draws them beautifully. and has taken out six of your children's? It's better now; I dare say it will be better still, soon. I retire to my chamber: I take a book—can't read one word of it. I resume my tragedy. Tragedy? Bosh!

I suppose Mr. Drencher thought his yesterday's patient would be better for a little more advice and medicine, for he must pay a second visit to Shrublands on this day, just after the row with the Captain had taken place, and walked up to

the upper regions, as his custom was. Very likely he found Mr. Clarence bathing his nose there, and prescribed for the injured organ. Certainly he knocked at the door of Miss Prior's schoolroom (the fellow was always finding a pretext for entering that apartment), and Master Bedford comes to me, with a wobegone, livid countenance, and a "Ha! ha! young Sawbones is up with her!"

"So, my poor Dick," I say, "I heard your confession as I

was myself running in to rescue Miss P. from that villain."

"My blood was hup," groans Dick,-"up, I beg your pardon. When I saw that young rascal lay a hand on her I could not help flying at him. I would have hit him if he had been my own father. And I could not help saying what was on my mind. It would come out; I knew it would some day. I might as well wish for the moon as hope to get her. She thinks herself superior to me, and perhaps she is mistaken. But it's no use; she don't care for me; she don't care for anybody. Now the words are out, in course I mustn't stay here."

"You may get another place easily enough with your character, Bedford!"

But he shook his head. "I'm not disposed to black no-body else's boots no more. I have another place. I have saved a bit of money. My poor old mother is gone, whom you used to be so kind to, Mr. B. I'm alone now. Confound that Sawbones, will he never come away? I'll tell you about my plans some day, sir, and I know you'll be so good as to help me." And away goes Dick, looking the picture of woe and despair.

Presently, from the upper rooms, Sawbones descends. I happened to be standing in the hall, you see, talking to Dick. Mr. Drencher scowls at me fiercely, and I suppose I return him haughty glance for glance. He hated me: I him: I liked him

to hate me.

"How is your patient, Mr.—a—Drencher?" I ask.

"Trifling contusion of the nose—brown paper and vinegar," says the Doctor.

"Great powers! did the villain strike her on the nose?" I

cry, in terror.

"Her—whom?" says he.
"Oh—ah—yes—indeed; it's nothing," I say, smiling. The fact is I had forgotten about Baker in my natural anxiety for Elizabeth.

"I don't know what you mean by laughing, sir?" says the

red-haired practitioner. "But if you mean chaff, Mr. Batchelor, let me tell you I don't want chaff, and I won't have chaff!"

and herewith, exit Sawbones, looking black doses at me.

Jealous of me, think I, as I sink down in a chair in the morning-room, where the combat had just taken place. And so thou, too, art fever-caught, my poor physician! What a fascination this girl has! Here's the butler: here's the medical man: here am I: here is the captain has been smitten—smitten on the nose. Has the gardener been smitten too, and is the page gnawing his buttons off for jealousy, and is Mons. Bulkeley equally in love with her? I take up a review, and think over this, as I glance through its pages.

As I am lounging and reading, Mons. Bulkeley himself makes his appearance, bearing in cloaks and packages belonging to his lady. "Have the goodness to take that cap off,"

I sav, coolly.

"You 'ave the goodness to remember that if hever I see you hout o' this 'ouse I'll punch your hugly 'ead off," says the monstrous menial. But I poise my paper-cutter, and he retires

growling.

From despondency I pass to hope; and the prospect of marriage, which before appeared so dark to me, assumes a gayer hue. I have four hundred a year, and that house in Devonshire Street, Bloomsbury Square, of which the upper part will be quite big enough for us. If we have children, there is Queen Square for them to walk and play in. Several genteel families I know, who still live in the neighborhood, will come and see my wife, and we shall have a comfortable, cosy little society, suited to our small means. The tradesmen in Lamb's Conduit Street are excellent, and the music at the Foundling always charming. I shall give up one of my clubs. The other is within an easy walk.

No: my wife's relations will not plague me. Bessy is a most sensible, determined woman, and as cool a hand as I know. She will only see Mrs. Prior at proper (and, I trust, distant) intervals. Her brothers and sisters will learn to know their places, and not obtrude upon me or the company which I keep. My friends, who are educated people and gentlemen, will not object to visit me because I live over a shop (my ground floor and spacious back premises in Devonshire Street are let to a German toy-warehouse). I shall add a hundred or two at least to my income by my literary labor; and Bessy, who has practised frugality all her life, and been a good daughter and a good sister, I know will prove a good wife, and, please

heaven! a good mother. Why, four hundred a year, plus two hundred, is a nice little income. And my old college friend, Wigmore, who is just on the Bench? He will, he must get me a place—say three hundred a year. With nine hundred a year

we can do quite well.

Love is full of elations and despondencies. The future, over which such a black cloud of doubt lowered a few minutes since, blushed a sweet rose-color now. I saw myself happy, beloved, with a competence, and imagined myself reposing in the delightful garden of Red Lion Square on some summer evening, and half a dozen little Batchelors frisking over the

flower-bespangled grass there.

After our little colloquy, Mrs. Bonnington, not finding much pleasure in my sulky society, had gone to Miss Prior's room with her young folks, and as the door of the morning-room opened now and again, I could hear the dear young ones scuttling about the passages, where they were playing at horses, and fighting, and so forth. After a while good Mrs. B. came down from the schoolroom. "Whatever has happened, Mr. Batchelor?" she said to me, in her passage through the morning-room. "Miss Prior is very pale and absent. You are very pale and absent. Have you been courting her, you naughty man, and trying to supplant Mr. Drencher? There now, you turn as red as my ribbon! Ah! Bessy is a good girl, and so fond of my dear children. 'Ah, dear Mrs. Bonnington,' she says to me-but of course you won't tell Lady B. : it would make Lady B. perfectly furious. 'Ah!' says Miss P. to me, 'I wish, ma'am, that my little charges were like their dear little uncles and aunts—so exquisitely brought up!' Pop again wished to beat his uncle. I wish-I wish Frederick would send that child to school! Miss P. owns that he is too much for her. Come, children, it is time to go to dinner." And, with more of this prattle, the good lady summons her young ones, who descend from the schoolroom with their nephew and niece.

Following nephew and niece, comes demure Miss Prior, to whom I fling a knowing glance, which says, plain as eyes can speak—Do, Elizabeth, come and talk for a little to your faithful Batchelor! She gives a sidelong look of intelligence, leaves a parasol and a pair of gloves on a table, accompanies Mrs. Bonnington and the young ones into the garden, sees the clergyman's wife and children disappear through the garden gate, and her own youthful charges engaged in the strawberrybeds; and, of course, returns to the morning-room for her

parasol and gloves, which she had forgotten. There is a calmness about that woman—an easy, dauntless dexterity, which frightens me—ma parole d'honneur. In that white breast is there a white marble stone in place of the ordinary cordial apparatus? Under the white velvet glove of that cool hand are there bones of cold steel?

"So, Drencher has again been here, Elizabeth?" I say.

She shrugs her shoulders. "To see that wretched Captain Baker. The horrid little man will die! He was not actually sober just now when he—when I—when you saw him. How I wish you had come sooner—to prevent that horrible, tipsy, disreputable quarrel. It makes me very, very thoughtful, Mr. Batchelor. He will speak to his mother—to Mr. Lovel. I shall have to go away. I know I must."

"And don't you know where you can find a home, Eliza-

"And don't you know where you can find a home, Elizabeth? Have the words I spoke this morning been so soon

forgotten?"

"Oh! Mr. Batchelor! you spoke in a heat. You could not think seriously of a poor girl like me, so friendless and poor, with so many family ties. Pop is looking this way, please. To a man bred like you, what can I be?"

"You may make the rest of my life happy, Elizabeth!" I cry. "We are friends of such old—old date, that you know

what my disposition is."

"Oh! indeed," says she, "it is certain that there never was a sweeter disposition or a more gentle creature." (Somehow I thought she said the words "gentle creature" with rather a sarcastic tone of voice.) "But consider your habits, dear sir. I remember how in Beak Street you used to be always giving, and, in spite of your income, always poor. You love ease and elegance; and having, I dare say, not too much for yourself now, would you encumber yourself with—with me and the expenses of a household? I shall always regard you, esteem you, love you as the best friend I ever had, and—voici venir la mère du vaurien."

Enter Lady Baker. "Do I interrupt a tête-à-tête, pray?" she asks.

"My benefactor has known me since I was a child, and befriended me since then," said Elizabeth, with simple kindness beaming in her look. "We were just speaking—I was just —ah!—telling him that my uncle has invited me most kindly to St. Boniface, whenever I can be spared; and if you and the family go to the Isle of Wight this autumn, perhaps you will intercede with Mr. Lovel, and let me have a little holiday Mary will take every charge of the children, and I do so long to see my dear aunt and cousins! And I was begging Mr. Batchelor to use his interest with you, and to entreat you to use your interest to get me leave. That was what our talk was about."

The deuce it was! I couldn't say No, of course; but I protest I had no idea until that moment that our conversation had been about aunt and uncle at St. Boniface. Again came the horrible suspicion, the dreadful doubt—the chill as of a cold serpent crawling down my back—which had made me pause and gasp, and turn pale, anon when Bessy and Captain Clarence were holding colloquy together. What has happened in this woman's life? Do I know all about her, or anything; or only just as much as she chooses? O Batch—Batch! I suspect you are no better than an old gaby!

"And Mr. Drencher has just been here and seen your son," Bessy continues, softly; "and he begs and entreats your lady-ship to order Captain Baker to be more prudent. Mr. D. says Captain Baker is shortening his life, indeed he is, by his care-

lessness."

There is Mr. Lovel coming from the City, and the children are running to their papa! And Miss Prior makes her patroness a meek curtsey, and demurely slides away from the room. With a sick heart I say to myself, "She has been—yes—humbugging is the word—humbugging Lady B. Elizabeth! Elizabeth! can it be possible thou art humbugging me too?"

Before Lovel enters, Bedford rapidly flits through the room.

He looks as a ghost. His face is awful gloomy.

"Here's the governor come," Dick whispers to me. "It must all come hout now—out, I beg your pardon. So she's caught you, has she? I thought she would." And he grins a ghastly grin.

"What do you mean?" I ask, and I dare say turn rather

red

"I know all about it. I'll speak to you to-night, sir. Confound her! confound her!" and he doubles his knuckles into his eyes, and rushes out of the room over Buttons entering with the afternoon tea.

"What on earth's the matter, and why are you knocking the things about?" Lovel asks at dinner of his butler, who, indeed, acted as one distraught. A savage gloom was depicted on Bedford's usually melancholy countenance, and the blunders in his service were many. With his brother-in-law Lovel did not exchange many words. Clarence was not yet forgiven for his escapade two days previous. And when Lady Baker cried, "Mercy, child! what have you done to yourself?" and the Captain replied," Knocked my face against a dark door—made my nose bleed," Lovel did not look up or express a word of sympathy. "If the fellow knocked his worthless head off, I should not be sorry," the widower murmured to me. Indeed, the tone of the Captain's voice, his ton, and his manners in general, were specially odious to Mr. Lovel, who could put up with the tyranny of women, but revolted against the vulgar-

ity and assumption of certain men.

As yet nothing had been said about the morning's quarrel. Here we were all sitting with a sword hanging over our heads, smiling and chatting, and talking cookery, politics, the weather, and what not. Bessy was perfectly cool and dignified at tea. Danger or doubt did not seem to affect her. If she had been ordered for execution at the end of the evening she would have made the tea, played her Beethoven, answered questions in her usual voice, and glided about from one to another with her usual dignified calm, until the hour of decapitation came, when she would have made her curtsey, and gone out and had the amputation performed quite quietly and neatly. I admired her, I was frightened before her. The cold snake crept more than ever down my back as I meditated on her. I made such awful blunders at whist that even good Mrs. Bonnington lost her temper with her fourteen shillings. Miss Prior would have played her hand out, and never made a fault, you may be sure. She retired at her accustomed hour. Mrs. Bonnington had her glass of negus, and withdrew too. Lovel keeping his eyes sternly on the Captain, that officer could only get a little sherry and seltzer, and went to bed sober. Lady Baker folded Lovel in her arms, a process to which my poor friend very humbly Everybody went to bed, and no tales were told of the morning's doings. There was a respite, and no execution could take place till to-morrow at any rate. Put on thy nightcap, Damocles, and slumber for to-night at least. Thy slumbers will not be cut short by the awful Chopper of Fate.

Perhaps you may ask what need had I to be alarmed? Nothing could happen to me. I was not going to lose a governess's place. Well, if I must tell the truth, I had not acted with entire candor in the matter of Bessy's appointment. In recommending her to Lovel and the late Mrs. L., I had answered for her probity, and so forth, with all my might. I had described the respectability of her family, her father's campaigns, her grandfather's (old Dr. Sargent's) celebrated sermons; and

had enlarged with the utmost eloquence upon the learning and high character of her uncle, the Master of Boniface, and the deserved regard he bore his niece. But that part of Bessy's biography which related to the Academy I own I had not touched upon. A quoi bon? Would every gentleman or lady like to have everything told about him or her? I had kept the Academy dark then; and so had brave Dick Bedford the butler; and should that miscreant Captain reveal the secret, I knew there would be an awful commotion in the building. I should have to incur Lovel's not unjust reproaches for suppressio veri, and the anger of those two viragines, the grandmothers of Lovel's children. I was more afraid of the women than of him, though conscience whispered me that I had not acted quite rightly by my friend.

When, then, the bed-candles were lighted, and every one said good-night, "Oh! Captain Baker," say I, gayly, and putting on a confoundedly hypocritical grin, "if you will come into my

room, I will give you that book.

"What book?" says Baker.

"The book we were talking of this morning."

"Hang me, if I know what you mean," says he. And luckily for me, Lovel, giving a shrug of disgust, and a good-night to me, stalked out of the room, bed-candle in hand. No doubt, he thought his wretch of a brother-in-law did not well remember

after dinner what he had done or said in the morning.

As I now had the Blacksheep to myself, I said calmly, "You are quite right. There was no talk about a book at all, Captain Baker. But I wished to see you alone, and impress upon you my earnest wish that everything which occurred this morning—mind, everything—should be considered as strictly private, and should be confided to no person whatever—you understand?—to no person."

"Confound me," Baker breaks out, "if I understood what you mean by your books and your 'strictly private.' I shall

speak what I choose-hang me!"

"In that case, sir," I said, "will you have the goodness to send a friend of yours to my friend Captain Fitzboodle? I must consider the matter as personal between ourselves. You insulted—and, as I find now, for the second time—a lady whose relations to me you know. You have given neither to her, nor to me, the apology to which we are both entitled. You refuse even to promise to be silent regarding a painful scene which was occasioned by your own brutal and cowardly behavior; and you must abide by the consequences, sir! you must abide by

the consequences!" And I glared at him over my flat candle-stick.

"Curse me!—and hang me!—and," &c., &c., &c., he says, "if I know what all this is about. What the dooce do you talk to me about books, and about silence, and apologies, and sending Captain Fitzboodle to me? I don't want to see Captain Fitzboodle—great fat brute! I know him perfectly well."

"Hush!" say I, "here's Bedford." In fact, Dick appeared

at this juncture, to close the house and put the lamps out.

But Captain Clarence only spoke or screamed louder. "What do I care about who hears me? That fellow insulted me already to-day, and I'd have pitched his life out of him, only I was down, and I'm so confounded weak and nervous, and just out of my fever—and—and hang it all! what are you driving at, Mr. What's-your-name?" And the wretched little creature cries almost as he speaks.

"Once for all, will you agree that the affair about which we

spoke shall go no further?" I say, as stern as Draco.

"I sha'n't say anythin' about it. I wish you'd leave me alone, you fellows, and not come botherin'. I wish I could get a glass of brandy-and-water up in my bedroom. I tell you I can't sleep without it," whimpers the wretch.

"Sorry I laid hands on you, sir," says Bedford, sadly. "It wasn't worth the while. Go to bed, and I'll get you something

warm."

"Will you, though? I couldn't sleep without it. Do now—do now! and I won't say anythin'—I won't now—on the honor of a gentleman, I won't. Good-night, Mr. What-d'-ye-call." And Bedford leads the helot to his chamber.

"I've got him in bed; and I've given him a dose; and I put some laudanum in it. He ain't been out. He has not had much to-day," says Bedford, coming back to my room, with his

face ominously pale.

"You have given him laudanum?" I ask.

"Sawbones gave him some yesterday,-told me to give him.

a little-forty drops," growls Bedford.

Then the gloomy major-domo puts a hand into each waist-coat pocket, and looks at me. "You want to fight for her, do you, sir? Calling out, and that sort of game? Phoo!"—and he laughs scornfully.

"The little miscreant is too despicable, I own," say I, "and it's absurd for a peaceable fellow like me to talk about powder

and shot at this time of day. But what could I do?"

"I say it's SHE ain't worth it," says Bedford, lifting up both clenched fists out of the waistcoat pockets.

"What do you mean, Dick?" I ask.

"She's humbugging you,—she's humbugging me,—she's humbugging everybody," roars Dick. "Look here, sir!" and out of one of the clenched fists he flings a paper down on the table.

"What is it?" I ask. It's her handwriting. I see the neat trim lines on the paper.

"It's not to you; nor yet to me," says Bedford.

"Then how dare you read it, sir?" I ask, all of a tremble. "It's to him. It's to Sawbones," hisses out Bedford. "Sawbones dropt it as he was getting into his gig; and I read it. I ain't going to make no bones about whether it's wrote to me or not. She tells him how you asked her to marry you. (Ha!) That's how I came to know it. And do you know what she calls you, and what he calls you,—that caster-hoil beast? And do you know what she says of you? That you hadn't pluck to stand by her to-day. There,—it's all down under her hand and seal. You may read it, or not, if you like. And if poppy or mandragora will medicine you to sleep afterwards, I just recommend you to take it. I shall go and get a drop of the Captain's bottle—I shall."

And he leaves me, and the fatal paper on the table.

Now, suppose you had been in my case—would you, or would you not, have read the paper? Suppose there is some news—bad news—about the woman you love, will you, or will you not, hear it? Was Othello a rogue because he let Iago speak to him? There was the paper. It lay there glimmering under the light, with all the house quiet.

## CHAPTER VI.

#### CECILIA'S SUCCESSOR.

Monsieur et honore lecteur! I see, as perfectly as if you were sitting opposite to me, the scorn depicted on your noble countenance when you read my confession that I, Charles Batchelor, Esquire, did burglariously enter the premises of Edward Drencher, Esquire, M. R. C. S. I. (phew! the odious pestle-grinder, I never could bear him!) and break open, and read a certain letter, his property. I may have been wrong, but I am candid. I tell my misdeeds; some fellows hold their

tongues. Besides, my good man, consider the temptation, and the horrid insight into the paper which Bedford's report had already given me. Would you like to be told that the girl of your heart was playing fast and loose with it, had none of her own, or had given hers to another? I don't want to make a Mrs. Robin Gray of any woman, and merely because "her mither presses her sair" to marry against her will. "If Miss Prior," thought I, "prefers this lint-scraper to me, ought I to baulk her? He is younger, and stronger, certainly, than myself. Some people may consider him handsome. (By the way, what a remarkable thing it is about many women, that, in affairs of the heart, they don't seem to care or understand whether a man is a gentleman or not.) It may be it is my superior fortune and social station which may induce Elizabeth to waver in her choice between me and my bleeding, bolusing, tooth-drawing rival. If so, and I am only taken from mercenary considerations, what a pretty chance of subsequent happiness do either of us stand! Take the vaccinator, girl, if thou preferrest him! I know what it is to be crossed in love already. It's hard, but I can bear it! I ought to know, I must know, I will know what is in that paper!" So saying, as I pace round and round the table where the letter lies flickering white under the midnight taper, I stretch out my hand—I seize the paper—I—well, I own it -there-yes-I took it, and I read it.

Or rather, I may say, I read that part of IT which the bleeder and blisterer had flung down. It was but a fragment of a letter-a fragment-oh! how bitter to swallow! A lump of Epsom salt could not have been more disgusting. It appeared (from Bedford's statement) that Æsculapius, on getting into his gig, had allowed this scrap of paper to whisk out of his pocket —the rest he read, no doubt, under the eyes of the writer. Very likely, during the perusal, he had taken and squeezed the false hand which wrote the lines. Very likely the first part of the precious document contained compliments to himfrom the horrible context I judge so — compliments to that vendor of leeches and bandages, into whose heart I dare say I wished ten thousand lancets might be stuck, as I perused the FALSE ONE's wheedling address to him! So ran the document. How well every word of it was engraven on my anguished heart! If page three, which I suppose was about the bit of the letter which I got, was as it was-what must pages one and two have been? The dreadful document began, then,

thus:-

<sup>&</sup>quot; --- dear hair in the locket, which I shall ever wear for the

sake of him who gave it"—(dear hair! indeed—disgusting carrots! She should have been ashamed to call it "dear hair") -"for the sake of him who gave it, and whose bad temper I shall pardon, because I think in spite of his faults he is a little fond of his poor Lizzie! Ah, Edward! how could you go on so the last time about poor Mr. B.! Can you imagine that I can ever have more than a filial regard for the kind old gentleman?" (Il était question de moi, ma parole d'honneur. I was the kind old gentleman!) "I have known him since my childhood. He was intimate in our family in earlier and happier days; made our house his home; and, I must say, was most kind to all of us children. If he has vanities, you naughty boy, is he the only one of his sex who is vain? Can you fancy that such an old creature (an old muff, as you call him, you wicked, satirical man!) could ever make an impression on my heart? No, sir!" (Aha! So I was an old muff, was I?) "Though I don't wish to make you vain too, or that other people should laugh at you, as you do at poor dear Mr. B., I think, sir, you need but look in your glass to see that you need not be afraid of such a rival as that. You fancy he is attentive to me? If you looked only a little angrily at him, he would fly back to London. To-day, when your horrid little patient did presume to offer to take my hand, when I boxed his little wicked ears and sent him spinning to the end of the room-poor Mr. Batch was so frightened that he did not dare to come into the room, and I saw him peeping behind a statue on the lawn, and he would not come in until the servants arrived. Poor man! We cannot all of us have courage like a certain Edward, who I know is as bold as a lion. Now, sir, you must not be quarrelling with that wretched little captain for being rude. I have shown him that I can very well take care of myself. I knew the odious thing the first moment I set eyes on him, though he had forgotten me. Years ago I met him, and I remember he was equally rude and tips-"

Here the letter was torn. Beyond "tips" it did not go. But that was enough, wasn't it? To this woman I had offered a gentle and manly, I may say a kind and tender heart—I had offered four hundred a year in funded property, besides my house in Devonshire Street, Bloomsbury—and she preferred Edward, forsooth, at the sign of the Gallipot: and may ten

thousand pestles smash my brains!

You may fancy what a night I had after reading that scrap. I promise you I did not sleep much. I heard the hours toll as I kept vigil. I lay amidst shattered capitals, broken shafts of the tumbled palace which I had built in imagination — oh!

how bright and stately! I sat amongst the ruins of my own happiness, surrounded by the murdered corpses of innocent-visioned domestic joys. Tick—tock! Moment after moment I heard on the clock the clinking footsteps of wakeful grief. I fell into a doze towards morning, and dreamed that I was dancing with Glorvina, when I woke with a start, finding Bedford arrived with my shaving-water, and opening the shutters. When he saw my haggard face he wagged his head.

"You have read it, I see, sir," says he.
"Yes, Dick," groaned I, out of bed, "I have swallowed it." And I laughed I may say a fiendish laugh. "And now I have taken it, not poppy nor mandragora, nor all the drowsy syrups in his shop (hang him) will be able to medicine me to sleep for some time to come!"

"She has no heart, sir. I don't think she cares for t'other chap much," groans the gloomy butler. "She can't, after having known us"—and my companion in grief, laying down

my hot-water jug, retreats.

I did not cut any part of myself with my razor. I shaved quite calmly. I went to the family at breakfast. My impression is I was sarcastic and witty. I smiled most kindly at Miss Prior when she came in. Nobody could have seen from my outward behavior that anything was wrong within. I was an apple. Could you inspect the worm at my core? No, no. Somebody, I think old Baker, complimented me on my good looks. I was a smiling lake. Could you see on my placid surface, amongst my sheeny water-lilies, that a corpse was lying under my cool depths? "A bit of devilled chicken?" "No, thank you. By the way, Lovel, I think I must go to town to-day." "You'll come back to dinner, of course?" "Well—no." "Oh, stuff! You promised me to-day and tomorrow. Robinson, Brown, and Jones are coming to-morrow, and you must be here to meet them." Thus we prattle on. I answer, I smile, I say, "Yes, if you please, another cup," or, "Be so good as to hand the muffins," or what not. But I am dead. I feel as if I am under ground, and buried. Life, and tea, and clatter, and muffins are going on, of course; and daisies spring, and the sun shines on the grass whilst I am under it. Ah, dear me! it's very cruel: it's very, very lonely: it's very odd! I don't belong to the world any more. I have done with it. I am shelved away. But my spirit returns and flitters through the world, which it has no longer anything to do with; and my ghost, as it were, comes and smiles at my own tombstone. Here lies Charles Batchelor, the Unloved One. Oh!

alone, alone! Why, Fate! didst thou ordain that I should be companionless? Tell me where the Wandering Jew is, that I may go and sit with him. Is there any place at a lighthouse vacant? Who knows where is the Island of Juan Fernandez? Engage me a ship and take me there at once. Mr. R. Crusoe, I think? My dear Robinson, have the kindness to hand me over your goatskin cap, breeches, and umbrella. Go home, and leave me here. Would you know who is the solitariest man on earth? That man am I. Was that cutlet which I ate at breakfast anon, was that lamb which frisked on the mead last week (beyond you wall where the unconscious cucumber lay basking which was to form his sauce)—I say, was that lamb made so tender, that I might eat him? And my heart, then? Poor heart! wert thou so softly constituted only that women might stab thee? So I am a Muff, am I? And she will always wear a lock of his "dear hair," will she? Ha! ha! The men on the omnibus looked askance as they saw me laugh. They thought it was from Hanwell, not Putney, I was escaping. Escape? Who can escape? I went into London. I went to the clubs. Jawkins, of course, was there; and my impression is that he talked as usual. I took another omnibus, and went back to Putney. "I will go back and revisit my grave," I thought. It is said that ghosts loiter about their former haunts a good deal when they are first dead; flit wistfully among their old friends and companions, and, I dare say, expect to hear a plenty of conversation and friendly tearful remark about themselves. But suppose they return, and find nobody talking of them at all? Or suppose, Hamlet (Père, and Royal Dane) comes back and finds Claudius and Gertrude very comfortable over a piece of cold meat, or what not? Is the late gentleman's present position as a ghost a very pleasant one? Crow, Cocks! Quick, Sundawn! Open, Trap-door! Allons: it's best to pop underground again. So I am a Muff, am I? What a curious thing that walk up the hill to the house was! What a different place Shrublands was yesterday to what it is to-day! Has the sun lost its light, and the flowers their bloom, and the joke its sparkle, and the dish its savor? Why, bless my soul! what is Lizzy herself-only an ordinary woman-freckled certainlyincorrigibly dull, and without a scintillation of humor: and you mean to say, Charles Batchelor, that your heart once beat about that woman? Under the intercepted letter of that cold assassin my heart had fallen down dead, irretrievably dead. I remember, à propos of the occasion of my first death, that perpetrated by Glorvina—on my second visit to Dublin—with what a strange

sensation I walked under some trees in the Phœnix Park beneath which it had been my custom to meet my False One Number I. There were the trees—there were the birds singing -there was the bench on which we used to sit-the same, but how different! The trees had a different foliage, exquisite amaranthine; the birds sang a song paradisiacal; the bench was a bank of roses and fresh flowers, which young Love twined in fragrant chaplets around the statue of Glorvina. Roses and fresh flowers? Rheumatisms and flannel waistcoats, you silly old man! Foliage and Song? O namby-pamby driveller! A statue?-a doll, thou twaddling old dullard !-a doll with carmine cheeks, and a heart stuffed with bran-I say, on the night preceding that ride to and from Putney, I had undergone death—in that omnibus I had been carried over to t'other side of the Stygian shore. I returned but as a passionless ghost, remembering my life days, but not feeling any more. Love was dead, Elizabeth! Why, the doctor came, and partook freely of lunch, and I was not angry. Yesterday I called him names, and hated him, and was jealous of him. To-day I felt no rivalship; and no envy at his success; and no desire to supplant him. No-I swear-not the slightest wish to make Elizabeth mine if she would. I might have cared for her yesterday-yesterday I had a heart. Psha! my good sir or madam. You sit by me at dinner. Perhaps you are handsome, and use your eyes. Ogle away. Don't baulk yourself, pray. But if you fancy I care a threepenny-piece about you—or for your eyes—or for your bonny brown hair—or for your sentimental remarks, sidelong warbled-or for you praise to (not of) my face-or for your satire behind my back-ah me !-how mistaken you are! Peine perdue, ma chère dame! The digestive organs are still in good working order-but the heart? Caret.

I was perfectly civil to Mr. Drencher, and, indeed, wonder to think how in my irritation I had allowed myself to apply (mentally) any sort of disagreeable phrases to a most excellent and deserving and good-looking young man, who is beloved by the poor, and has won the just confidence of an extensive circle of patients. I made no sort of remark to Miss Prior, except about the weather and the flowers in the garden. I was bland, easy, rather pleasant, not too high-spirited, you understand.—No: I vow you could not have seen a nerve wince, or the slightest alteration in my demeanor. I helped the two old dowagers; I listened to their twaddle; I gayly wiped up with my napkin three-quarters of a glass of sherry which Popham flung over my trousers. I would defy you to know that I had

gone through the ticklish operation of an excision of the heart a few hours previously. Heart—pooh! I saw Miss Prior's lip quiver. Without a word between us, she knew perfectly well that all was over as regarded her late humble servant. She winced once or twice. While Drencher was busy with his plate, the gray eyes cast towards me no interjectional looks of puzzled entreaty. She, I say, winced; and I give you my word I did not care a fig whether she was sorry, or pleased, or happy, or going to be hung. And I can't give a better proof of my utter indifference about the matter, than the fact that I wrote two or three copies of verse descriptive of my despair. They appeared, you may perhaps remember, in one of the annuals of those days, and were generally attributed to one of the most sentimental of our young poets. I remember the reviews said they were "replete with emotion," "full of passionate and earnest feeling," and so forth. Feeling, indeed !-ha! ha! "Passionate outbursts of a grief-stricken heart!"-Passionate scrapings of a fiddlestick, my good friend. "Lonely" of course rhymes with "only," and "gushes" with "blushes," and "despair with "hair," and so on. Despair is perfectly compatible with a good dinner, I promise you. Hair is false: hearts are false. Grapes may be sour, but claret is good, my master. Do you suppose I am going to cry my eyes out, because Chloe's are turned upon Strephon? If you find any whimpering in mine, may they never wink at a bee's wing again.

When the Doctor rose presently, saying he would go and see the gardener's child, who was ill, and casting longing looks at Miss Prior, I assure you I did not feel a tittle of jealousy, though Miss Bessy actually followed Mr. Drencher into the lawn, under the pretext of calling back Miss Cissy, who had run

thither without her bonnet.

"Now, Lady Baker, which was right? you or I? asks bonny Mrs. Bonnington, wagging her head towards the lawn where this couple of innocents were disporting.

"You thought there was an affair between Miss Prior and the medical gentleman," I say, smiling. "It was no secret,

Mrs. Bonnington."

"Yes, but there were others who were a little smitten in that quarter, too," says Lady Baker; and she in turn wags her

old head towards me.

"You mean me?" I answer, as innocent as a new-born babe. "I am a burnt child, Lady Baker; I have been at the fire, and am already thoroughly done, thank you. One of your charming sex jilted me some years ago; and once is quite enough, I am much obliged to you."

This I said, not because it was true; in fact, it was the reverse of truth; but if I choose to lie about my own affairs, pray, why not? And though a strictly truth-telling man generally, when I do lie I promise you I do it boldly and well.

"If, as I gather from Mrs. Bonnington, Mr. Drencher and Miss Prior like each other, I wish my old friend joy. I wish Mr. Drencher joy with all my heart. 'The match seems to me excellent. He is a deserving, a clever, and a handsome young fellow; and I am sure, ladies, you can bear witness to her goodness, after all you have known of her."

"My dear Batchelor," says Mrs. Bonnington, still smiling and winking, "I don't believe one single word you say—not one single word!" and she looks infinitely pleased as she

speaks.

"Oh!" cries Lady Baker, "my good Mrs. Bonnington, you are always match-making—don't contradict me. You know you thought—"

"Oh, please don't," cries Mrs. B.

"I will. She thought, Mr. Batchelor, she actually thought that our son, that my Cecilia's husband, was smitten by the governess. I should like to have seen him dare!" and her flashing eyes turn towards the late Mrs. Lovel's portrait, with its faded simper leering over the harp. "The idea that any woman could succeed that angel, indeed!"

"Indeed, I don't envy her," I said.

"You don't mean, Batchelor, that my Frederick would not make any woman happy?" cries the Bonnington. "He is only seven-and-thirty, very young for his age, and the most affectionate of creatures. I am surprised, and it's most cruel, and most unkind of you to say that you don't envy any woman that marries my boy!"

"My dear good Mrs. Bonnington, you quite misapprehend

me," I remark.

"Why, when his late wife was alive," goes on Mrs. B—, sobbing, "you know with what admirable sweetness and gentleness he bore her—her—bad temper—excuse me, Lady Baker!

"Oh, pray, abuse my departed angel!" cries the Baker; "say that your son should marry and forget her—say that those darlings should be made to forget their mother. She was a woman of birth, and a woman of breeding, and a woman of family, and the Bakers came in with the Conqueror, Mrs. Bonnington—"

"I think I heard of one in the court of Pharaoh," I inter-

posed.

"And to say that a Baker is not worthy of a Lovel is pretty

news indeed! Do you hear that, Clarence?"

"Hear what, ma'am?" says Clarence, who enters at this juncture. "You're speakin' loud enough—though blesht if I hear two sh-shyllables."

"You wretched boy, you have been smoking!"

"Shmoking—haven't I?" says Clarence with a laugh; "and I've been at the 'Five Bells,' and I've been having a game of billiards with an old friend of mine," and he lurches towards a decanter.

"Ah, don't drink any more, my child!" cries the mother.

"I'm as sober as a judge, I tell you. You leave so precious little in the bottle at dinner, that I must get it when I can, mustn't I, Batchelor, old boy? We had a row yesterday, hadn't we? No, it was sugar-baker. I'm not angry—you're not angry. Bear no malish. Here's your health, old boy!"

The unhappy gentleman drank his bumper of sherry, and, tossing his hair off his head, said—"Where's the governess—where's Bessy Bellenden? Who's that kickin' me under the

table, I say?"

"Where is who?" asks his mother.

"Bessy Bellenden—the governess—that's her real name. Known her these ten years. Ushed to dansh at Prinsh's Theatre. Remember her in the corps-de-ballet. Ushed to go behind the shenes. Dooshid pretty girl!" maunders out the tipsy youth; and as the unconscious subject of his mischievous talk enters the room, again he cries out, "Come and sit by me, Bessy Bellenden, I say!"

The matrons rose with looks of horror in their faces. "A ballet-dancer!" cries Mrs. Bonnington. "A ballet-dancer!"

echoes Lady Baker. "Young woman, is this true?"

"The Bulbul and the Roshe—hay?" laughs the Captain.

"Don't you remember you and Fosbery in blue and shpangles? Always all right, though, Bellenden was. Fosbery washn't: but Bellenden was. Give you every credit for that, Bellenden. Boxsh my earsh. Bear no malish—no—no—malish! Get some more sherry, you—whatsh your name—Bedford, butler—and I'll pay you the money I owe you." And he laughs his wild laugh, utterly unconscious of the effect he is producing. Bedford stands staring at him as pale as death. Poor Miss Prior is as white as marble. Wrath, terror, and wonder are in the countenances of the dowagers. It is an awful scene!

"Mr. Batchelor knows that it was to help my family I did

it." says the poor governess.

"Yes, by George! and nobody can say a word against her," bursts in Dick Bedford, with a sob; "and she is as honest as any woman here."

"Pray, who told you to put your oar in?" cries the tipsy

Captain.

"And you knew that this person was on the stage, and you introduced her into my son's family? Oh, Mr. Batchelor, Mr. Batchelor, I didn't think it of you! Don't speak to me, Miss!"

"You brought this woman to the children of my adored Cecilia?" calls out the other dowager. "Serpent, leave the room! Pack your trunks, viper! and quit the house this instant. Don't touch her, Cissy. Come to me, my blessing. Go away, you horrid wretch!"

"She ain't a horrid wretch; and when I was ill she was very good to us," breaks in Pop, with a roar of tears: "and you sha'n't go, Miss Prior—my dear, pretty Miss Prior. You sha'n't go!" and the child rushes up to the governess, and

covers her neck with tears and kisses.

"Leave her, Popham my darling blessing! - leave that

woman!" cries Lady Baker.

"I won't, you old beast!—and she sha-a-a'n't go. And I wish you was dead—and, my dear, you sha'n't go, and Pa sha'n't let you!"—shouts the boy.

"Oh, Popham, if Miss Prior has been naughty, Miss Prior

must go!" says Cecilia, tossing up her head.

"Spoken like my daughter's child!" cries Lady Baker: and little Cissy, having flung her little stone, looks as if she had performed a very virtuous action.

"God bless you, Master Pop,-you are a trump, you are!"

says Mr. Bedford.

"Yes, that I am, Bedford; and she sha'n't go, shall she?" cries the boy.

But Bessy stooped down sadly, and kissed him. "Yes, I

must, dear," she said.

"Don't touch him! Come away, sir! Come away from her this moment!" shrieked the two mothers.

"I nursed him through the scarlet fever, when his own mother would not come near him," says Elizabeth, gently.

"I'm blest if she didn't," sobs Bedford—"and—bub—bub

-bless you, Master Pop!"

"That child is wicked enough, and headstrong enough, and rude enough already!" exclaims Lady Baker. "I desire, young woman, you will not pollute him further!"

"That's a hard word to say to an honest woman, ma'am," says Bedford.

"Pray, Miss, are you engaged to the butler, too?" hisses

out the dowager.
"There's very little the matter with Barnet's child—only teeth. \* \* \* \* What on earth has happened? My dear Lizzy -my dear Miss Prior-what is it?" cries the Doctor, who en-

ters from the garden at this juncture. And Fabib I solototal

"Nothing has happened, only this young woman has appeared in a new character," says Lady Baker. "My son has just informed us that Miss Prior danced upon the stage, Mr. Drencher; and if you think such a person is a fit companion for your mother and sisters, who attend a place of Christian worship, I believe—I wish you joy."

"Is this—is this—true?" asks the Doctor, with a look of

bewilderment.

"Yes, it is true," sighs the girl.

"And you never told me, Elizabeth?" groans the Doctor.

"She's as honest as any woman here," calls out Bedford. "She gave all the money to her family."

"It wasn't fair not to tell me. It wasn't fair," sobs the Doctor. And he gives her a ghastly parting look, and turns his back.

"I say, you—Hi! What-d'you-call-'im? Sawbones!" shrieks out Captain Clarence. "Come back, I say. She's all

right, I say. Upon my honor, now, she's all right."

"Miss P shouldn't have kept this from me. My mother and sisters are Dissenters, and very strict. I couldn't ask a party into my family who has been—who has been—I wish you good morning," says the Doctor, and stalks away.

"And now, will you please to get your things ready, and go too?" continues Lady Baker. "My dear Mrs. Bonnington,

you think-"

"Certainly, certainly, she must go!" cries Mrs. Bonnington.

"Don't go till Lovel comes home, Miss. These ain't your mistresses. Lady Baker don't pay your salary. If you go, I go, too. There!" calls out Bedford, and mumbles something in her ear about "the end of the world."

"You go, too; and a good riddance, you insolent brute!"

exclaims the dowager.

"Oh, Captain Clarence! you have made a pretty morning's

work," I say.

"I don't know what the dooce all the sherry—all the shinty's about," says the Captain, playing with the empty decanter. "Gal's a very good gal—pretty gal. If she choosesh dansh shport her family, why the doosh shouldn't she dansh shport a

family?"

"That is exactly what I recommend this person to do," says Lady Baker, tossing up her head. "And now I will thank you

to leave the room. Do you hear?"

As poor Elizabeth obeyed this order, Bedford darted after her; and I know ere she had gone five steps he had offered her his savings and everything he had. She might have had mine yesterday. But she had deceived me. She played fast and loose with me. She had misled me about this Doctor. I could trust her no more. My love of yesterday was dead, I say. That vase was broken, which never could be mended. She knew all was over between us. She did not once look at me as she left the room.

The two dowagers—one of them, I think, a little alarmed at her victory—left the house, and for once went away in the same barouche. The young maniac who had been the cause

of the mischief staggered away, I know not whither.

About four o'clock, poor little Pinhorn, the children's maid, came to me, wellnigh choking with tears, as she handed me a letter. "She's goin' away—she saved both them children's lives, she did. And she've wrote to you, sir. And Bedford's a goin'. And I'll give warnin', I will, too!" And the weeping handmaiden retires, leaving me, perhaps somewhat frightened, with the letter in my hand.

"Dear sir," she said—"I may write you a line of thanks and farewell. I shall go to my mother. I shall soon find another place. Poor Bedford, who has a generous heart, told me that he had given you a letter of mine to Mr. D—. I saw this morning that you knew everything. I can only say now that for all your long kindnesses and friendship to my family I

am always your sincere and grateful-E. P."

Yes: that was all. I think she was grateful. But she had not been candid with me, nor with the poor surgeon. I had no anger: far from it; a great deal of regard and good-will, nay admiration, for the intrepid girl who had played a long, hard part very cheerfully and bravely. But my foolish little flicker of love had blazed up and gone out in a day; I knew that she never could care for me. In that dismal, wakeful night, after reading the letter, I had thought her character and story over, and seen to what a life of artifice and dissimulation necessity had compelled her. I did not blame her. In such circumstances, with such a family, how could she be frank and open? Poor thing! poor thing! Do we know anybody? Ah! dear

me, we are most of us very lonely in the world. You who have any who love you, cling to them and thank God. I went into the hall towards evening: her poor trunks and packages were there, and the little nursery-maid weeping over them. The sight unmanned me; and I believe I cried myself. Poor Elizabeth! And with these small chests you recommence your life's lonely voyage! I gave the girl a couple of sovereigns. She sobbed a God bless me! and burst out crying more desperately than ever. Thou hast a kind heart, little Pinhorn!

"'Miss Prior—to be called for.' Whose trunks are these? says Lovel, coming from the City. The dowagers drove up at the same moment.

"Didn't you see us from the omnibus, Frederick?" cries her ladyship, coaxingly. "We followed behind you all the way!"

"We were in the barouche, my dear," remarks Mrs. Bon-

nington, rather nervously.

"Whose trunks are these?—what's the matter?—and what's the girl crying for?" asks Lovel.

"Miss Prior is a going away," sobs Pinhorn.

"Miss Prior going? Is this your doing, my Lady Baker? —or yours, mother?" the master of the house says, sternly.

"She is going, my love, because she cannot stay in this

family," says mamma.

"That woman is no fit companion for my angel's children, Frederick!" cries Lady B.

"That person has deceived us all, my love!" says mamma.

"Deceived? - how? Deceived whom?" continues Mr.

Lovel, more and more hotly.

"Clarence, love! come down, dear! Tell Mr. Lovel everything. Come down and tell him this moment," cries Lady Baker to her son, who at this moment appears on the corridor which was round the hall.

"What's the row now, pray?" And Captain Clarence descends, breaking his shins over poor Elizabeth's trunks, and

calling down on them his usual maledictions.

"Tell Mr. Lovel where you saw that-that person, Clar-

ence? Now, sir, listen to my Cecilia's brother!"

"Saw her—saw her in blue and spangles, in the 'Rose and the Bulbul,' at the Prince's Theatre—and a doosid nice-looking girl she was too!" says the Captain.

"There, sir!"

"There, Frederick!" cry the matrons in a breath.

"And what then?" asks Lovel.

"Mercy! you ask, What then, Frederick? Do you know what a theatre is? Tell Frederick what a theatre is, Mr. Batchelor, and that my grandchildren must not be educated

"My grandchildren — my Cecilia's children," shrieks the other, "must not be pol-luted by——"
"Silence!" I say. Have you a word against her—have you, pray, Baker?"

"No. 'Gad! I never said a word against her," says the

Captain. "No, hang me, you know-but-"

"But suppose I knew the fact the whole time?" asks Lovel, with rather a blush on his cheek. "Suppose I knew that she danced to give her family bread? Suppose I knew that she toiled and labored to support her parents, and brothers and sisters? Suppose I know that out of her pittance she has continued to support them? Suppose I know that she watched my own children through fever and danger? For these reasons I must turn her out of doors, must I? No, by heaven !-No!-Elizabeth! - Miss Prior! - Come down! - Come here, I beg

The governess, arrayed as for departure, at this moment appeared on the corridor running round the hall. As Lovel continued to speak very loud and resolute, she came down looking

deadly pale.

Still much excited, the widower went up to her and took her hand. "Dear Miss Prior!" he said-"dear Elizabeth! you have been the best friend of me and mine. You tended my wife in illness, you took care of my children in fever and danger. You have been an admirable sister, daughter in your own family—and for this, and for these benefits conferred upon us, my relatives-my mother-in-law-would drive you out of my doors! It shall not be !--by heavens, it shall not be!"

You should have seen little Bedford sitting on the governess's box, shaking his fist, and crying "Hurrah!" as his master spoke. By this time the loud voices and the altercation in the hall had brought a half dozen of servants from their quarters into the hall. "Go away, all of you!" shouts Lovel; and the domestic posse retires, Bedford being the last to retreat, and nodding approval at his master as he backs out of the room.

"You are very good, and kind, and generous, sir," says the pale Elizabeth, putting a handkerchief to her eyes. "But without the confidence of these ladies, I must not stay, Mr. Lovel. God bless you for your goodness to me. I must, if you please,

return to my mother."

The worthy gentleman looked fiercely round at the two elder women, and again seizing the governess's hand, said—" Elizabeth! dear Elizabeth! I implore you not to go! If you love the children—"

"Oh, sir!" (A cambric veil covers Miss Prior's emotion,

and the expression of her face, on this ejaculation.)

"If you love the children," gasps out the widower, "stay with them. If you have a regard for—for their father"— (Timanthes, where is thy pocket-handkerchief?)—"remain in this house, with such a title as none can question. Be the mistress of it."

"His mistress—and before me!" screams Lady Baker.

"Mrs. Bonnington, this depravity is monstrous!"

"Be my wife, dear Elizabeth!" the widower continues. "Continue to watch over the children, who shall be motherless no more."

"Frederick! Frederick! haven't they got us?" shrieks one

of the old ladies.

"Oh, my poor dear Lady Baker!" says Mrs. Bonnington.
"Oh, my poor dear Mrs. Bonnington!" says Lady Baker.

"Frederick, listen to your mother," implores Mrs. Bonnington.

"To your mothers," sobs Lady Baker.

And they both go down on their knees, and I heard a boohoo of a guffaw behind the green-baized servants' door, where I

have no doubt Mons. Bedford was posted.

"Ah, Batchelor! dear Batchelor, speak to him!" cries good Mrs. Bonny. "We are praying this child, Batchelor—this child whom you used to know at College, and when he was a good, gentle, obedient boy. You have influence over my poor Frederick. Exert it for his heart-broken mother's sake; and you shall have my bubble-uble-essings, you shall."

"Send for Doctor Straightwaist! Order him to pause in his madness," cries Baker; "or it is I, Cecilia's mother, the mother

of that murdered angel, that shall go mad."

"Angel? Allons!" I say. "Since his widowhood, you have never given the poor fellow any peace. You have been forever quarrelling with him. You took possession of his house; bullied his servants; spoiled his children—you did, Lady Baker."

"Sir," cries her ladyship, "you are a low, presuming, vulgar

man! Clarence, beat this rude man!"

"Nay," I say, "there must be no more quarrelling to-day.

And I am sure Captain Baker will not molest me. Miss Prior,

I am delighted that my old friend should have found a woman of good sense, good conduct, good temper—a woman who has had many trials, and borne them with very great patience—to take charge of him, and make him happy. I congratulate you both. Miss Prior has borne poverty so well that I am certain she will bear good fortune, for it is good fortune to become the wife of such a loyal, honest, kindly gentleman as Frederick Lovel."

After such a speech as that, I think I may say, liberavi animam. Not one word of complaint, you see, not a hint about "Edward," not a single sarcasm, though I might have launched some terrific shots out of my quiver, and have made Lovel and his bride-elect writhe before me. But what is the need of spoiling sport? Shall I growl out of my sulky manger, because my comrade gets the meat? Eat it, happy dog! and be thankful. Would not that bone have choked me if I had tried it? Besides, I am accustomed to disappointment. Other fellows get the prizes which I try for. I am used to run second in the dreary race of love. Second? Psha! Third, Fourth. Que sais-je? There was the Bombay captain in Bess's early days. was Edward. Here is Frederick. Go to, Charles Batchelor; repine not at fortune: but be content to be Batchelor still. My sister has children. I will be an uncle, a parent to them. Isn't Edward of the scarlet whiskers distanced? Has not poor Dick Bedford lost the race—poor Dick, who never had a chance, and is the best of us all? Besides, what fun it is to see Lady Baker deposed: think of Mrs. Prior coming in and reigning over her! The purple-faced old fury of a Baker, never will she bully, and rage, and trample more. She must pack up her traps and be off. I know she must. I can congratulate Lovel sincerely. and that's the fact.

And here at this very moment, and as if to add to the comicality of the scene, who should appear but mother-in-law No. 2, Mrs. Prior, with her Bluecoat boy, and two or three of her children, who had been invited, or had invited themselves, to drink tea with Lovel's young ones, as their custom was whenever they could procure an invitation. Master Prior had a fine "copy" under his arm, which he came to show to his patron Lovel. His mamma, entirely ignorant of what had happened, came fawning in with her old poke-bonnet, her old pocket, that vast depository of all sorts of stores, her old umbrella, and her usual dreary smirk. She made her obeisance to the matrons,—she led up her Bluecoat boy to Mr. Lovel, in whose office she hoped to find a clerk's place for her lad, on whose very coat

and waistcoat she had designs whilst they were yet on his back :

and she straightway began business with the dowagers-

"My lady, I hope your ladyship is quite well?" (a curtsey.)
"Dear, kind Mrs. Bonnington! I came to pay my duty to you,
mum. This is Louisa, my lady, the great girl for whom your
ladyship so kindly promised the gown. And this is my little
girl, Mrs. Bonnington, mum, please; and this is my big Blue.
Go and speak to dear, kind Mr. Lovel, Gus, our dear good
friend and protector,—the son and son-in-law of these dear
ladies. Look, sir, he has brought his copy to show you; and
it's creditable to a boy of his age, isn't it, Mr. Batchelor? You
can say, who know so well what writing is, and my kind services
to you, sir—and—Elizabeth, Lizzie, my dear! where's your
spectacles, you—you—"

Here she stopped, and looking alarmed at the group, at the boxes, at the blushing Lovel, at the pale countenance of the governess, "Gracious goodness!" she said, "what has hap-

pened? Tell me, Lizzy, what is it?"

"Is this collusion, pray?" says ruffled Mrs. Bonnington.

"Collusion, dear Mrs. Bonnington?"

"Or insolence?" bawls out my Lady Baker.

"Insolence, your ladyship? What—what is it? What are these boxes—Lizzy's boxes? Ah!" the mother broke out with a scream, "you've not sent the poor girl away? Oh! my poor child—my poor children!"

"The Prince's Theatre has come out, Mrs. Prior," here

said I.

The mother clasps her meagre hands. "It wasn't the darling's fault. It was to help her poor father in poverty. It was I who forced her to it. Oh, ladies! ladies!—don't take the bread out of the mouth of these poor orphans!"—and genuine tears rained down her yellow cheeks.

"Enough of this," says Mr. Lovel, haughtily. "Mrs. Prior, your daughter is not going away. Elizabeth has promised to stay with me, and never to leave me—as governess no longer,

but as—" and here he takes Miss Prior's hand.

"His wife! Is this—is this true, Lizzy?" gasped the mother.

"Yes, mamma," meekly said Miss Elizabeth Prior.

At this the old woman flung down her umbrella, and uttering a fine scream, folds Elizabeth in her arms, and then runs up to Lovel: "My son! my son!" says she (Lovel's face was not bad, I promise you, at this salutation and salute). "Come here, children!—come, Augustus, Fanny, Louisa, kiss your dear

brother, children! And where are yours, Lizzy! Where are Pop and Cissy? Go and look for your little nephew and niece, dears: Pop and Cissy in the schoolroom, or in the garden, dears. They will be your nephew and niece now. Go and

fetch them, I say."

As the young Priors filed off, Mrs. Prior turned to the two other matrons, and spoke to them with much dignity: "Most hot weather, your ladyship, I'm sure! Mr. Bonnington must find it very hot for preaching, Mrs. Bonnington! Lor'! there's that little wretch beating my Johnny on the stairs. Have done, Pop, sir! How ever shall we make those children agree, Elizabeth?"

Quick, come to me, some skilful delineator of the British dowager, and draw me the countenances of Lady Baker and Mrs. Bonnington!

"I call this a jolly game, don't you, Batchelor, old boy?" remarks the Captain to me. "Lady Baker, my dear, I guess

your ladyship's nose is out of joint."

"O Cecilia—Cecilia! don't you shudder in your grave?" cries Lady B. "Call my people, Clarence—call Bulkeley—call my maid! Let me go, I say, from this house of horror!" and the old lady dashed into the drawing-room, where she uttered I know not what incoherent shrieks and appeals before that

calm, glazed, simpering portrait of the departed Cecilia.

Now this is a truth, for which I call Lovel, his lady, Mrs. Bonnington, and Captain Clarence Baker, as witnesses. Well, then, whilst Lady B. was adjuring the portrait, it is a fact that a string of Cecilia's harp—which has always been standing in the corner of the room under its shroud of Cordovan leather—a string, I say, of Cecilia's harp cracked, and went off with a loud bong, which struck terror into all beholders. Lady Baker's agitation at the incident was awful; I do not like to describe it—not having any wish to say anything tragic in this narrative—though that I can write tragedy, plays of mine (of which envious managers never could be got to see the merit) I think will prove, when they appear in my posthumous works.

Baker has always averred that at the moment when the harpstring broke, her heart broke too. But as she lived for many years, and may be alive now for what I know; and as she borrowed money repeatedly from Lovel—he must be acquitted of the charge which she constantly brings against him of hastening her own death, and murdering his first wife Cecilia. "The harp that once in Tara's Halls" used to make such a piteous feeble thrumming, has been carted off I know not whither; and Cecilia's portrait, though it has been removed from the post of honor (where, you conceive, under present circumstances it would hardly be a propos), occupies a very reputable position in the pink room up stairs, which that poor young Clarence in-

habited during my visit to Shrublands.

All the house has been altered. There's a fine organ in the hall, on which Elizabeth performs sacred music very finely. As for my old room, I will trouble you to smoke there under the present government. It is a library now, with many fine and authentic pictures of the Lovel family hanging up in it, the English branch of the house with the wolf crest, and Gare à la louve for the motto, and a grand posthumous portrait of a Portuguese officer (Gandish), Elizabeth's late father.

As for dear old Mrs. Bonnington, she, you may be sure, would be easily reconciled to any live mortal who was kind to her, and any plan which should make her son happy; and Elizabeth has quite won her over. Mrs. Prior, on the deposition of the other dowagers, no doubt expected to reign at Shrublands, but in this object I am not very sorry to say was disappointed. Indeed, I was not a little amused, upon the very first day of her intended reign—that eventful one of which we have been describing the incidents—to see how calmly and gracefully Bessy pulled the throne from under her, on which the old lady was clambering.

Mrs. P. knew the house very well, and everything which it contained; and when Lady Baker drove off with her son and her suite of domestics, Prior dashed through the vacant apartments gleaning what had been left in the flurry of departure—a scarlet feather out of the dowager's room, a shirt-stud and a bottle of hair-oil, the Captain's property. "And now they are gone, and as you can't be alone with him, my dear, I must be

with you," says she, coming down to her daughter.

"Of course, mamma, I must be with you," says obedient Elizabeth.

"And there is the pink room, and the blue room, and the yellow room for the boys—and the chintz boudoir for me—I can

put them all away, oh, so comfortably!"

"I can come and share Louisa's room, mamma," says Bessy.

"It will not be proper for me to stay here at all—until afterwards, you know. Or I can go to my uncle at St. Boniface.

Don't you think that will be best, eh, Frederick?"

"Whatever you wish, my dear Lizzy!" says Lovel.

"And I dare say there will be some little alterations made in the house You talked, you know, of painting, Mr. Lovel:

and the children can go to their grandmamma Bonnington. And on our return when the alterations are made we shall always be delighted to see you, Mr. Batchelor—our kindest old friend. Shall we not, Frederick?" nabiled during my

"Always, always," said Frederick.

"Come, children, come to your teas," calls out Mrs. P., in a resolute voice.

"Dear Pop, I'm not going away—that is, only for a few days, dear," says Bessy, kissing the boy; "and you will love me, won't you?"

"All right," says the boy. But Cissy said, when the same appeal was made to her: "I shall love my dear mamma!" and makes her new mother-in-law a very polite curtsey.

"I think you had better put off those men you expect to

dinner to-morrow, Fred," I say to Lovel.
"I think I had, Batch," says the gentleman.

"Or you can dine with them at the club, you know?" remarks Elizabeth.

"Yes, Bessy."

"And when the children have had their tea I will go with mma. My boxes are ready, you know," says arch Bessy.
"And you will stay and dine with Mr. Lovel, won't you, Mr.

Batchelor?" asks the lady.

It was the dreariest dinner I ever had in my life. No undertaker could be more gloomy than Bedford, as he served us. We tried to talk politics and literature. We drank too much, purposely. Nothing would do. "Hang me, if I can stand this, Lovel," I said as we sat mum over our third bottle. "I will go back and sleep at my chambers. I was not a little soft upon her myself, that's the truth. Here's her health, and happiness to both of you, with all my heart." And we drained a great bumper apiece, and I left him. He was very happy I should go.

Bedford stood at the gate, as the little pony-carriage came for me in the dusk. "God bless you, sir," says he. "I can't stand it; I shall go too." And he rubbed his hands over his

eyes.

He married Mary Pinhorn, and they have emigrated to Melbourne; whence he sent me, three years ago, an affectionate

letter, and a smart gold pin from the diggings.

A month afterwards, a cab might have been seen driving from the Temple to Hanover Square: and a month and a day after that drive, an advertisement might have been read in the Post and Times: "Married, on Thursday, 10th, at St. George's, Hanover Square, by the Reverend the Master of St. Boniface

College, Oxbridge, uncle of the bride, Frederick Lovel, Esquire, of Shrublands, Roehampton, to Elizabeth, eldest daughter of

the late Captain Montagu Prior, K. S. F."

We may hear of LOVEL MARRIED some other day, but here is an end of LOVEL THE WIDOWER. Valete et plaudite, you good people, who have witnessed the little comedy. Down with the curtain; cover up the boxes; pop out the gas-lights. Ho! cab. Take us home, and let us have some tea, and go to bed. Good-night, my little players. We have been merry together, and we part with soft hearts and somewhat rueful countenances, don't we?

THE END.

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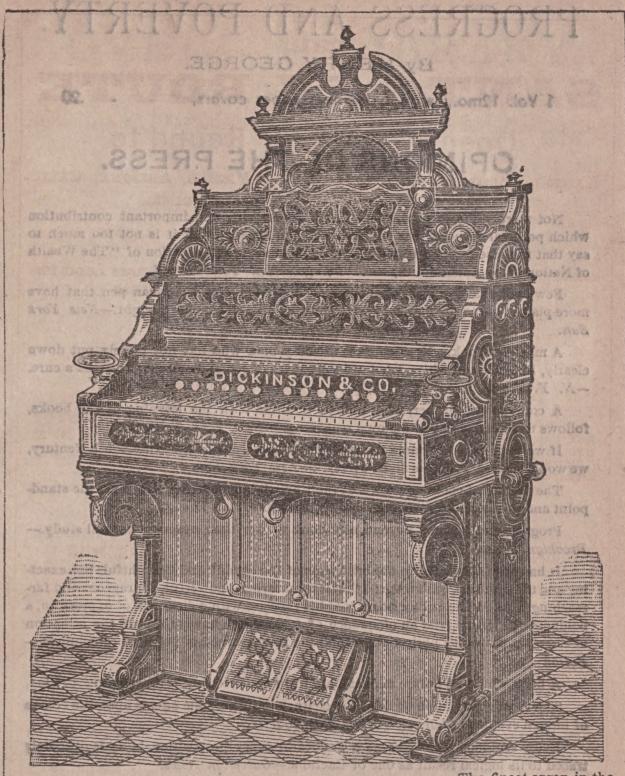
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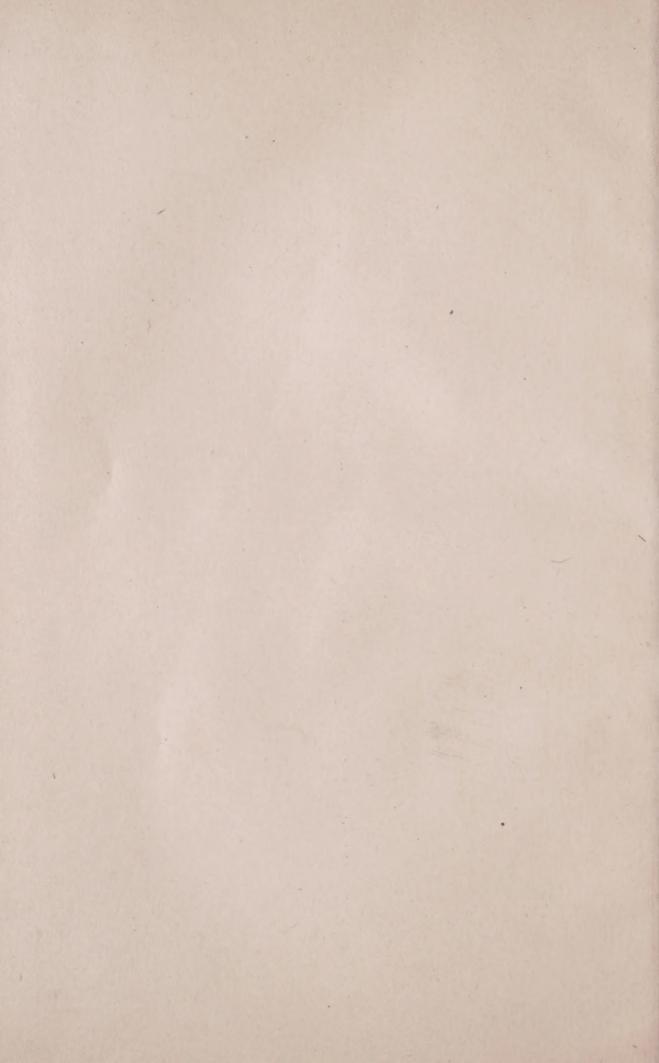
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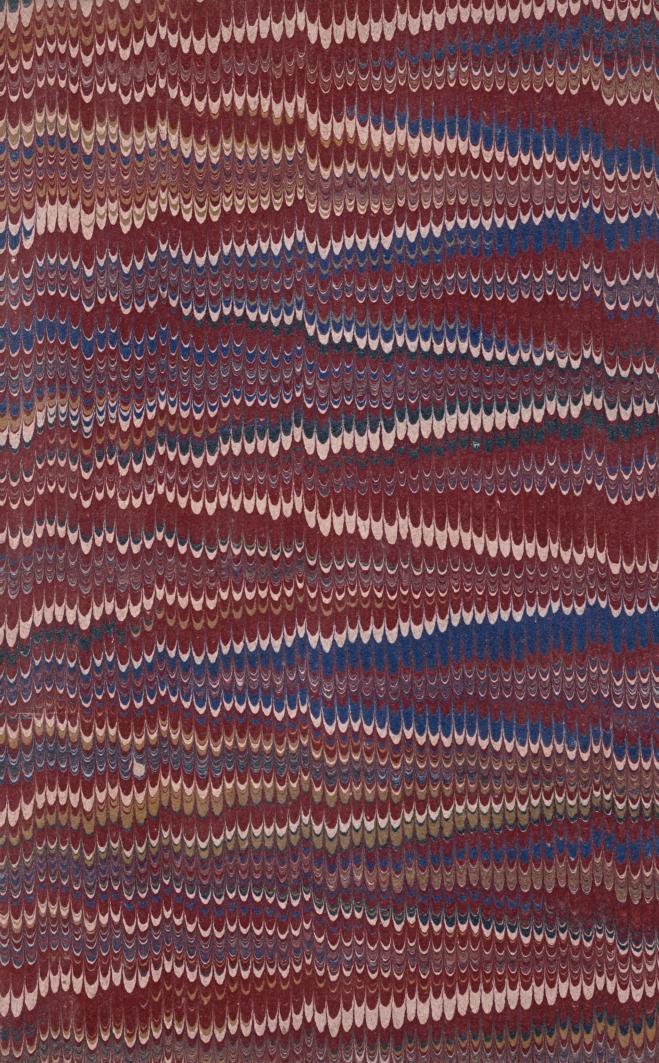
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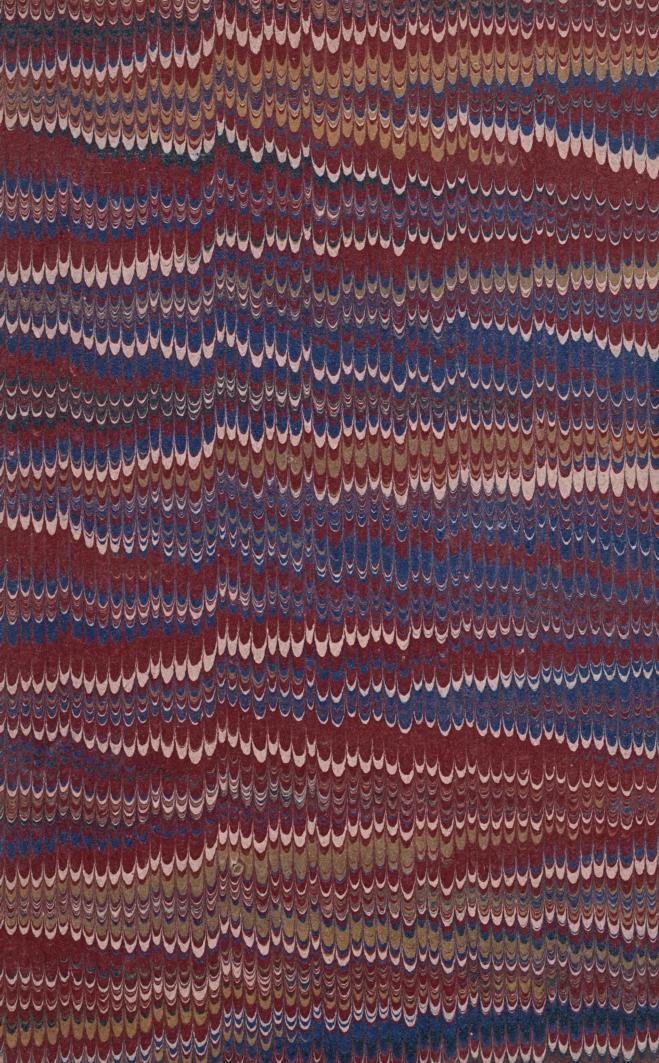
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